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# Landscapes of Progress: The Place of Physical Geography in Scottish Enlightenment Accounts of Stadial Theory

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## Summary

The aim of this thesis is to explore the place of physical geography in Scottish Enlightenment accounts of stadial theory. It does this through examining the historical works of the following authors: Adam Ferguson, Henry Home, (Lord Kames), John Millar and Adam Smith. Stimulated by the 1748 publication of Montesquieu's *Spirit of the Laws* each of these individuals presented distinctive explanations for historical progress. Conventional interpretations of Scottish Enlightenment accounts of stadial theory have tended to stress how these were informed by debates over moral conduct and political practice in line with the rise of commercial society. However, these approaches have neglected to consider the place of physical geography within Scottish Enlightenment accounts of historical progress. Consequently, this thesis aims to amend this picture and demonstrate how physical geography provided further insight into the arguments deployed by stadial theorists. This thesis will therefore be structured in the following way. In the introductory chapter, the focus will be on Montesquieu's understanding of physical geography within the *Spirit of the Laws,* in demonstrating that his account provided key insights into the differences between European and Asiatic societies which Scottish Enlightenment authors would draw from in order to develop their individual arguments. The second chapter will focus on the work of Adam Ferguson and his *An Essay on the History of Civil Society*. In the process, it will demonstrate how he used physical geography to illustrate the way social stability was rooted in civic virtue. In the third chapter, Henry Home's (Lord Kames) *Sketches of the History of Man* will be examined. It will be argued that physical geography allowed Kames to demonstrate a sceptical interpretation of societal progress which culminated in an ambiguous view of humanity. The final chapter considers the place of physical geography in Adam Smith's *Lectures on Jurisprudence* and the *Wealth of Nations.* In addition to this, this chapter will consider the work of John Millar as an example of the legacy of Smith's argument and how it informed accounts of physical geography in stadial theory written after the *Lectures*. Doing so it demonstrates Smith's understanding of physical geography to be concerned with the way historical progress was conditioned by local influences. This thesis will therefore argue that physical geography provides a way of viewing Scottish Enlightenment accounts of stadial theory which use the premise that societal development was intrinsically linked to a range of physical factors including location, climate, topography and fertility.

## Thesis Introduction

Over the past forty years, historical analysis has gained new insights into the Scottish Enlightenment. In particular, the scholarship has revealed a more nuanced view of the ideas of stadial theory. As a form of historical explanation, stadial theory was characterised by the existence of certain stages of societal development: Savagery, Barbarism, Agriculture and Commerce. In contrast to Ronald Meek's materialist account of the development of stadial theory, the contemporary historiography has demonstrated the way themes such as politeness, luxury, civic virtue and political despotism were explored in the writings of Scottish Enlightenment authors.[1] For John Pocock, 'British' eighteenth-century accounts of history were motivated by two significant factors.[2] Firstly, they wished to explore how it was that Europe emerged as a collection of independent states situated just south of the Arctic, bordering the Atlantic Ocean. Secondly, they aimed to identify the shared common values which held these societies together. Here, Pocock emphasised the multiple contexts in which the term 'Enlightenment' should be seen.[3] Whereas traditional interpretations of Scottish Enlightenment accounts of historical progress were understood to be fused with notions of improvement, recent understandings have emphasised a more complex picture. Highlighting the notion of cultural change, these later interpretations have explored the relationship between stadial theory and ideas of commerce and sociability. A significant factor within all the explanations for historical progress analysed in this thesis was the role played by physical geography. Whereas previous studies have read the landscape as part of a wider nexus of variables which define human society, through making it the centre of attention this thesis demonstrates that it reveals certain fundamental intricacies of eighteenth-century political thought. Physical

[1] Ronald Meek, *Social Science and the Ignoble Savage* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1976). See also Ronald Meek, 'The Scottish Contribution to Marxist Sociology', in *Democracy and the Labour Movement,* ed. John Savile (London: Lawrence and Wishart, 1954). For a discussion of Meek's account of Smith's influence on Marx, see Andrew Skinner, 'A Scottish Contribution to Marxist Sociology?', in *Classical and Marxian Political Economy,* ed. Ian Bradley and Michael Howard (London: Palgrave Macmillan, 1982). For separate discussions on the themes of the place of despotism and the military in the Scottish Enlightenment, see Iain McDaniel, *Adam Ferguson in the Scottish Enlightenment: The Roman Past and Europe's Future* (Cambridge, Massachusetts: Harvard University Press, 2013), and John Robertson, *The Scottish Enlightenment and the Militia Issue* (Edinburgh: John Donald, 1985).

[2] Pocock's use of the term 'British' includes Edward Gibbon and his *Decline and Fall of the Roman Empire*.

[3] In this thesis, the understanding of the Scottish Enlightenment follows the path set out by John Robertson in *The Case for the Enlightenment.* For Robertson, the intellectual unity of the Enlightenment was typified by an investigation into developments in the areas of moral philosophy, historical progress and political economy. For a concise discussion of this and how it compares to other approaches, see Silvia Sebastiani, *The Scottish Enlightenment: Race, Gender, and the Limits of Progress* (New York: Palgrave Macmillan), 1-9.

geography, therefore, ought to be seen as a crucial element of any historical explanation. Within the context of the Scottish Enlightenment this takes on a substantial meaning with the arguments contained in *L'esprit de lois* providing a stimulus for debates over social formation.[4] Whilst recent scholarship has made good progress in understanding the place of the climate in Enlightenment debates, what is absent is a fundamental assessment of the idea of physical geography within these discourses.[5] The central aim of this thesis, therefore, is to examine the place of physical geography within Scottish Enlightenment accounts of stadial theory.[6] Through focusing on the works of Adam Ferguson; Henry Home (Lord Kames); Adam Smith along with John Millar, and how they each engaged with Montesquieu, this thesis will demonstrate the crucial role of physical geography in Scottish Enlightenment explanations of historical progress.

Whilst the majority of authors examined in this thesis are historically understood to have advanced certain arguments which come within the category of stadial theory, it is important to note that at no point in their works did any of the authors consciously identify themselves using that term. The idea of stadial theory is therefore drawn from a distinct strand of twentieth-century developmental thought which came into use in light of the Scottish Enlightenment. Furthermore, the premise of prescribing certain criteria which identify the extent to which a society has progressed mark it out from alternative developmental theories of history exemplified by Whig History or the idea of a 'history of civil society'. For Ronald Meek, the different stages of economic progress correspond to distinctive styles of government

[4] Montesquieu, Charles de Secondat, Baron de, *De l'esprit de lois,* ed. Anne M. Cohler, Basia Carolyn Miller and Harold Samuel Stone. (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1989). Robert Shackleton, *Montesquieu: A Critical Biography* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1961). *Montesquieu's Science of Politics: Essays on The Spirit of Laws*, ed. David W. Carrithers, Michael A. Mosher, and Paul A. Rahe (London: Rowman & Littlefield, 2001).

[5] For a discussion of the relationship between race and climate, see Silvia Sebastiani, *The Scottish Enlightenment*, 23-45. Recent studies focusing on the connection between environmental concerns and intellectual debates in the eighteenth-century, see Fredrik Albritton Jonsson, *Enlightenment's Frontier: The Scottish Highlands and the Origins of Environmentalism* (Yale: Yale University Press, 2013). See also Richard Grove, *Green Imperialism: Colonial Expansion, Tropical Island Edens and the Origins of Environmentalism, 1600–1860* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2003). For both authors, there exists a definitive link between political economy and the environment. Alternative cultural approaches to the historical relationship between society and the environment can be found in Keith Thomas, *Man and the Natural World: Changing Attitudes in England 1500-1800* (London: Penguin, 1984). See also Clarence J. Glacken, *Traces on the Rhodian Shore: Nature and Culture in Western Thought from Ancient Times to the End of the Eighteenth Century* (London: University of California Press, 1967).

[6] Whilst this thesis has examined the place of physical geography in intellectual debate, what it has not addressed is understandings and development of geographic knowledge in the Enlightenment. On this topic, see David Livingston, *The Geographical Tradition: Episodes in the History of a Contested Enterprise* (Oxford: Blackwell, 1992). For a more wide-ranging and useful discussion on this topic, see David N. Livingstone and Charles W.J. Withers, *Geography and Enlightenment* (London: University of Chicago Press, 1999).

and social structure.[7] In framing it in these terms, Meek's point was to emphasise that not only was the 'four stages theory' crucial to the intellectual development of the eighteenth-century but, more significantly, it drew on arguments connected with the idea of the savage in order to ferment a particular view of the narrative of historical progress. In contrast to Rousseau's ideas surrounding the noble savage and the historical process being driven by the nurturing of human tendencies and the emergence of social inequality, Scottish Enlightenment authors such as Smith stressed the importance of civil law and property rights.[8] Within his *Lectures on Jurisprudence*, Adam Smith made a point of connecting the transformation of economic relations within a society with alterations in the civil-legal code.[9] For Meek, therefore, the development of the four stages theory was indistinguishable from the historical emergence of capitalism.

The emphasis on the role of the Scottish Enlightenment in the development of economic theory was challenged in the late twentieth-century through a wider examination of the intellectual depth of its character. Beginning in the late 1960s, historians such as Duncan Forbes and Hugh Trevor-Roper expanded the scope of study which defined the period in question. Through their teaching at Cambridge University and their subsequent publications in the decades after, both historians shifted the focus onto how individuals associated with the Scottish Enlightenment contributed to discussions around the idea of the historical progress of society.[10] Part of their endeavour was to reveal the way the Scottish Enlightenment ran parallel to similar intellectual movements across Europe. Whilst these innovations opened the study of the Scottish Enlightenment up to historical enquiry, in the following decades, historians began to examine both the social and institutional context in which stadial theorists wrote.[11]

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[7] Ronald L. Meek, *Social Science and the Ignoble Savage* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1976), 2.
[8] Jean-Jacques Rousseau, *The Social Contract and Discourses*, trans. G.D.H. Cole (London: J.M. Dent, 1973). See also Meek, *Social Science and the Ignoble Savage*, 115-16.
[9] Adam Smith, *Lectures on Jurisprudence*, ed. R.L. Meek, D.D. Raphael and P.G. Stein (Indianapolis: Liberty Fund, 1978).
[10] See Hugh Trevor-Roper, 'The Scottish Enlightenment', *Studies on Voltaire and the Eighteenth Century,* 68, (1967), 1655-58, and Duncan Forbes, *Hume's Philosophical Politics* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1975), cited in John Robertson, *The Case for the Enlightenment: Scotland and Naples 1680-1760* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2005), 25.
[11] Nicholas T. Phillipson, 'Culture and Society in the eighteenth-century province: the case of Edinburgh and the Scottish Enlightenment', in *The University in Society*, ed. Lawrence Stone (Princeton: Princeton, 1974, II, 407-48, and Richard B Sher, *Church and University in the Scottish Enlightenment: The Moderate Literati of Edinburgh* (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 1985), cited in John Robertson, *The Case for the Enlightenment: Scotland and Naples 1680-1760*, 25.

One significant context with which to understand the development of stadial theory is through Adam Smith's *Lectures on Jurisprudence*. As Nicholas Philipson highlights, in the course given at Edinburgh University, Smith was able to outline and explore many of the themes which would become central to his account of historical progress.[12] One of the key insights revealed in the *Lectures* was Smith's criticism of the power of the nobility to hamper commercial interests. This theme was consistent with his wider account of political economy which endorsed a vision of commercial progress and social change.[13] This correspondence between historical explanation and economic development can be seen throughout stadial theory. Yet these distinct characteristics of stadial theory also shared similarities with wider trends in European historiography. This point is crucial in understanding the significance of the idea of 'Europe' to Enlightenment debates. Here, the work of John Pocock is of fundamental importance.

Consistent with this focus on the national setting in which theories of progress were produced, Pocock set about identifying the historiographical shift that underpinned the intellectual context in which the conjectural histories were produced. Here, the place of physical geography was of paramount importance in how these histories explored the unique character of societal formation in Europe.[14] Within his work, Pocock has demonstrated how the expansion in knowledge of different societies around the globe shaped the contemporary Enlightenment historiography. A major source for this was the abundance of travel literature and comparative ethnologies that had emerged in the preceding centuries.[15] These ethnographic accounts informed not only a sense of the exceptional character of European history, but also reveal the way in which the relationship between physical geography and historical explanation was crucial to the accounts of societal progress.

Although the stadial theorists examined in this thesis drew their inspiration from Montesquieu and his *L'esprit de lois*, it is important to also see their ideas in a wider historical context of thinking about the progress of societies. In this respect, the place of physical geography ought to be understood in terms of a longer European intellectual debate focused on

[12] Nicholas Phillipson, *Adam Smith: An Enlightened Life* (London: Penguin, 2011), 102-20.
[13] *Ibid*., 111-113.
[14] John Pocock, *Barbarism and Religion Volume Two: Narratives of Civil Government* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1999), 317.
[15] For a good discussion of the role of comparative accounts of European and non-European societies in the centuries that preceded the Scottish Enlightenment, see Anthony Pagden, *The fall of natural man : The American Indian and the origins of comparative ethnology* ( Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1982).

the way societies advanced in relation to their physical circumstances. Here the works of John Locke and Samuel Pufendorf preamble many of the debates which were central to the writings considered in this thesis. For Locke, the place of physical geography surfaced in relation to the creation of civil society and in particular, economic development on the American continent: "Thus in the beginning all the World was *America*, and more so than that is now".[16] Along with Locke, Pufendorf also took the role of physical geography to have a bearing on the politics of a society. Through defending the right of a state's exclusive rights over its coastal areas he demonstrated how territorial integrity was a fundamental element of its ability to govern.[17] In addition to this, Pufendorf also illustrated how the physical location of a society could influence its historical development. An example of this is his account of the threat posed by the Turks to the states of central Europe. In explaining the strategic dilemma of the central European powers, Pufendorf noted that: "For the old saying of Philip Melanchiton, … if the Turks come into Germany they will certainly come by the way of Poland, did not arise from a Prophetick Spirit, but has its good Reason in Geography."[18] Significantly, this understanding of European history emphasised the role of physical location in the historical process. Furthermore, it also corresponded with the view of European history outlined by Montesquieu.

As this thesis will demonstrate, the way Montesquieu approached the issue of historical formation was to link the continents of Europe and Asia to ideas of political liberty on the one hand, and despotism on the other. Thus, like Pufendorf, Montesquieu saw the rise of the 'East' as a threat to the free societies of Europe.[19] In the aftermath of the Scottish Enlightenment these ideas would evolve into a more extreme account of the exceptionalism of European, and in particular Germanic, society. Drawing on Montesquieu's reading of Tacitus, the German poet Johann Gottfried Herder would embrace this idea in order to develop an account of 'the nation'

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[16] John Locke, *Two Treatises of Government*, ed. Peter Laslett (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2010), 301. See also Ronald L. Meek, *Social science and the ignoble savage* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1976), 37.

[17] Samuel Pufendorf, *Two Books of the Elements of Universal Jurisprudence*, (Indianapolis: Liberty Fund, 2009), ed. and revised Thomas Behme, trans. William Abbott Oldfather (1931), xiii.

[18] Samuel Pufendorf, *An Introduction to the History of the Principal Kingdoms and States of Europe*, ed. Michael J. Seidler (Indianapolis: Liberty Fund, 2011), 402.

[19] Unlike Pufendorf, for Montesquieu the threat to Europe came from China. For an example of this, see Montesquieu, Charles de Secondat, Baron de, *De l'esprit de lois,* ed. Anne M. Cohler, Basia Carolyn Miller and Harold Samuel Stone. (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1989), 126-8.

[20] Johann Gottfried Herder, 'Fragments on Recent German Literature', *Sämmtliche Werkem*, no. 20, vol. 1 (1764-7), 366. Cited in Christopher B. Krebs, *A Most Dangerous Book – Tacitus's Germania from the Roman Empire to the Third Reich* (New York: W.W. Norton, 2011), 179-81.

as having certain essential characteristics.[20] Whilst Herder himself refused to condone any racial sentiment, his argument would nevertheless became a foundation on which nineteenth and twentieth-century racial nationalism would be based. Furthermore, the afterlife of his essentialist view of nationhood provides some indication of what happened to physical geography in the period following the Scottish Enlightenment. It demonstrates a shift away from seeing the relationship between physical geography and historical progress in terms of the development of mankind towards a view that only certain types of societies located in Europe could advance to a level of societal and civic progress.[21] In this sense, then, this thesis focuses on one of the central episodes in the long trajectory in historical thinking around the relationship between physical geography and societal progress.

Inspired by David Hume's expression, 'Jealousy of Trade', for Istvan Hont, the eighteenth-century was characterised by the clash of economic progress with the Renaissance doctrine of republican grandeur.[22] In the *Wealth of Nations,* Adam Smith's analysis concerned the state's capacity to foster economic competition whilst simultaneously developing a political strategy that could guarantee its security.[23] Within this context, his account of European history focused on the rise of commerce as a major driving force behind the development of political liberty.[24] Unlike Montesquieu's emphasis on the significance of the Germanic military success over Rome, Smith saw the legacy of Rome's commercial strategy as having a major influence on the relationship between economic progress and political institutions.[25] At the start of Book Three, he stated: "The great commerce of every civilized society, is that carried on between the inhabitants of the town and those of the country."[26] In the process, he demonstrated that the emergence of commerce influenced changes in the character and politics of a society where the idea of an 'unnatural and retrograde order' was echoed through linking the agricultural and

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[21] For a good discussion of the German reception of the Scottish Enlighenment, see Fania Oz-Salzberger, *Translating the Enlightenment: Scottish Civic Discourse in Eighteenth Century Germany* (Oxford: Oxford University press, 1995).

[22] Istvan Hont, *Jealousy of Trade: International Competition and the Nation-State in Historical Perspective* (Cambridge, Massachusetts: Harvard University Press, 2005), 11. The idea of a 'Jealousy of trade' originates in David Hume's essay of the same name, which in turn was taken from Thomas Hobbes' discussion of human nature in Chapter 13 of *Leviathan* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1996), 90. For Hume's essay see David Hume, *Political Essays,* ed. Knud Haakonssen (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1994), 150-151. See also the discussion in Istvan Hont, *Jealousy of Trade,* 1-2.

[23] *Ibid*., 8.

[24] Istvan Hont, *Jealousy of Trade,* 106.

[25] *Ibid*., 105-7.

[26] Adam Smith, *An Inquiry into the Nature and Causes of the Wealth of Nations, Volume I*, ed. R.H. Campbell, A.S. Skinner and W.B. Todd (Indianapolis: Liberty Fund, 1976), 376.

manufacturing economy.[27] Drawing on David Hume's ideas around historical progress and economic change, Smith saw developments in Europe with respect to political liberty as the natural outcome of a modern commercial society.[28]

For Silvia Sebastiani, the Scottish Enlightenment was characterised by an implicit contradiction between the ideas of progress and cultural hierarchy.[29] This unresolved tension questioned why certain societies had been able to escape the perils of savagery and barbarism whilst others had not. Unlike Meek's materialist interpretation of the Scottish Enlightenment, her concern was with the progress of culture and race. Building on from her argument, this thesis considers the way physical geography related to these questions.

In the first chapter, attention will be focused on the work of Charles de Secondat, Baron de Montesquieu and his *L'esprit de lois.* As Sebastiani makes clear, within his text, Montesquieu presented a causal explanation for societal progress.[30] Here, the relationship between particular factors including laws, cultural mores, physical location and climate were used to develop a sophisticated explanation for differences in social formation around the globe. In Book Eighteen, Montesquieu set out an account of the impact of the terrain on social structure. One aspect of his discussion was the way this affected developments in the civil legal code:

> The laws are very closely related to the way that various peoples procure their subsistence. There must be a more extensive code of laws for a people attached to commerce and the sea than for a people satisfied to cultivate their lands. There must be a greater one for the latter than for a people who live by their herds. There must be a greater one for these last than for a people who live by hunting.[31]

Here, Montesquieu gave an explanation of stadial theory in which every stage of societal progress corresponded with a precise relationship between law and the physical terrain. Crucially, physical geography allowed him to highlight global variations in social structure. In analysing these arguments, this thesis will demonstrate how Montesquieu's understanding of physical geography was used by Scottish Enlightenment authors in their respective accounts of stadial theory.

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[27] Adam Smith *Wealth of Nations*, 409.
[28] David Hume, *Political Essays*, 52.
[29] Sebastiani, *The Scottish Enlightenment*, 19.
[30] *Ibid*., 25.
[31] Montesquieu, *L'esprit de lois,* 289.

The second chapter will be concerned with the work of Adam Ferguson, and in particular his *An Essay on the History of Civil Society*. Within the *Essay*, questions of historical progress were deeply connected to the tensions between civic virtue and commercial activity. This has led many commentators to mischaracterise his argument regarding societal development. On the one hand, some commentators have emphasised his contribution to early sociological theory.[32] On the other hand, Ferguson's arguments have been understood in relation to ideas of despotism and moral decline.[33] Consistent with this second line of thought, the thesis will demonstrate that Ferguson's explanation of stadial theory took physical geography to be fundamental in avoiding societal regression.

In the subsequent chapter, attention will turn to the account of stadial theory provided by Henry Home (Lord Kames) in his *Sketches of the History of Man.* Conventional understandings of his work have usually treated it as a background to other Scottish Enlightenment authors. However, recent scholarship on his legal writings has reawakened a wider interest in his arguments.[34] In contrast to the other authors examined in this thesis, Kames' account of stadial theory was deeply tied in with questions of theology and race.[35] In this thesis the place of physical geography will be examined in relation to these concerns in order to highlight his moral scepticism towards commercial society and human nature. In doing so, his understanding of physical geography will be shown to be linked to a deeply sceptical view of moral and societal progress.

In the final chapter, attention will be turned to the place of physical geography in Adam Smith's *Lectures on Jurisprudence*.[36] It will demonstrate that questions of the terrain and the environment were of paramount importance within his explanation of stadial theory. For Donald Winch, Smith's argument in the *Theories of Moral Sentiment* and the *Wealth of Nations*

[32] On this topic see William C. Lehman, *Adam Ferguson and the Beginnings of Modern Sociology* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1930). See also Michel Foucault, *The Birth of Biopolitics: Lectures at the Collège de France, 1978-1979*, ed. Michel Senellart, trans. Graham Burchell (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2008), 291-316; David Kettler, *The Social and Political Thought of Adam Ferguson* (Columbus: Ohio State University Press, 1965); See also Lisa Hill, *The Passionate Society: The Social, Political and Moral Thought of Adam Ferguson* (Dordrecht: Springer, 2006).
[33] Iain McDaniel, *Adam Ferguson in the Scottish Enlightenment: The Roman Past and Europe's Future*. John Robertson, *The Scottish Enlightenment and the Militia Issue* (Edinburgh: John Donald, 1985).

[34] Andreas Rahmatian, *Lord Kames: Legal and Social Theorist* (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2015).
[35] Colin Kidd, *The Forging of Races: Race and Scripture in the Protestant Atlantic World, 1600-2000* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2006), 95-102.
[36] Adam Smith, *Lectures on Jurisprudence* (Oxford: Oxford University Press 1978)

were linked through his account of historical progress within the *Lectures*.[37] Building on the work of Winch, this chapter will demonstrate how Smith's argument shifted the explanation for historical difference away from Montesquieu's emphasis on cultural values, towards exploring the local physical circumstances which gave rise to social structure.[38] Drawing attention to the influence of Hume, this thesis will reveal how physical geography was used within the *Lectures* to examine the central relationship between cultural custom and historical progress.[39] Finally, the chapter will turn to the example of John Millar, one of Adam Smith's pupils, and will focus on his *The Origin and Distinction of Ranks.* Here, the place of physical geography allowed him to compare the cultural attitudes and customs of different societies around the globe. It will demonstrate the way Millar extended Smith's argument and in doing so reveals the way cultural attitudes played a vital role in historical progress. For Nicholas Philipson, Smith's account of historical progress was forged within the context of Scottish Enlightenment understandings of social conduct.[40] Through examining Smith's arguments in this way, the thesis will demonstrate that his account of stadial theory within the *Lectures* took physical geography to be a central factor in the development of civil government by revealing the 'local' character of historical progress.

[37] Donald Winch, *Adam Smith's Politics: An Essay in Historiographic Revision* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1978), 9-10: Adam Smith, *Theory of Moral Sentiment* (Oxford: Oxford University Press 1976): Adam Smith, *An Inquiry Into The Nature And Causes of The Wealth of Nations: Volume I & II* (Oxford: Oxford University Press 1976).

[38] Donald Winch, 'Adam Smith's 'enduring particular result': a political and cosmopolitan perspective', in *Wealth & Virtue: The Shaping of Political Economy in the Scottish Enlightenment*, ed. Michael Ignatieff and Istvan Hont (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1983), 267-268.

[39] Nicholas Phillipson, *Adam Smith: An Enlightened Life* (London: Penguin, 2011), 138.

[40] Nicholas Phillipson, 'Language, sociability, and history: some reflections on the foundations of Adam Smith's science of man', in *Economy, Polity, and Society: Essays in British Intellectual History, 1750-1950*, ed. Stefan Collini, Richard Whatmore and Brian Young (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2000), 71-2.

## Montesquieu, Physical Geography and Historical Progress

### Introduction

The publication of *L'esprit de lois* in 1748 marked a significant episode in intellectual development in the eighteenth-century. Inspired in part by the crisis engulfing his society, Montesquieu's work served as a warning to France and the rest of Europe of the dangers of political corruption and despotic tendencies. Divided into four parts, *L'esprit de lois* outlined a view of social structure which focused on how issues such as religion, climate, civil laws and social customs informed the development of political institutions. In this way, he presented an explanation of societal progress which linked institutional structures to social mores. This partnership was one aspect which marked his understanding of history out from more political, narrative-based account of history exemplified by David Hume and his *History of England*. [41] For Silvia Sebastiani, the contrast between Montesquieu and Hume rested on the way in which climate and physical geography ranked alongside these other factors such as civil law and cultural custom in explaining historical progress.[42] This multi-faceted approach gave Montesquieu the essential tools to explain the rise of commercial society in Europe. In Part Three of *L'esprit de lois,* Montesquieu outlined an explanation of social structure which rested on the influence of the climate and physical geography. At the centre of this account was the view that the development of any society rested in part on these two variables. Through examining the Scottish Enlightenment's reception of Montesquieu's understanding of physical geography, the aim of this chapter will be to demonstrate how it fed into stadial theory accounts of societal progress.

Conventional understandings of stadial theory have rooted it in an economic explanation of historical development. For Ronald Meek, Montesquieu's work, alongside the Genevan author Jean-Jacques Rousseau, gave individuals such as Adam Ferguson, Lord Kames, John Millar and Adam Smith the tools on which to construct their own accounts of societal progress.[43] Whilst each of the authors interpreted *L'esprit de lois* in their own fashion, there existed certain frictions between them around the issue of commercial society. Therefore,

[41] David Hume, *The History of England: from the Invasion of Julius Caesar to The Revolution in 1688 in Six Volumes*, ed. W. B. Todd (Indianapolis: Liberty Fund, 1983).
[42] Silvia Sebastiani, *The Scottish Enlightenment: Race, Gender, and the Limits of Progress* (New York: Palgrave 2013), 23.
[43] Ronald L. Meek, *Social Science and the Ignoble Savage* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1976).

the aim of this chapter will be to introduce Montesquieu's work as a central source on which each individual drew.

This chapter is divided into two halves: in the first half, attention will be focused on how Montesquieu depicted climate and physical geography within *L'esprit de lois*. Starting with a discussion of how these factors relate to his wider account of social structure, the chapter will draw attention to what Silvia Sebastiani labels his 'mosaic of conditions.'[44] Through demonstrating how his emphasis on the interrelationship of certain key factors played out in *L'esprit de lois*, it will be shown how physical geography ought to be read as just one element of a wider explanation for societal progress.[45] Closely related to this, the relationship between climate and race played a significant role in the way physical geography highlighted variations in societal progress around the globe. Here, attention will be drawn to Montesquieu's discussion of the issue in the opening chapters of Book Fourteen. Consistent with wider eighteenth-century views on human biology and race, Montesquieu's argument broke with traditional Biblical understandings of reproduction which emphasised the role of divine intervention.[46] Building on this argument, it will be demonstrated how the climatic explanation was closely associated with Montesquieu's ideas surrounding racial categorisation and societal development. Here, the place of physical geography provided a way of understanding his argument that emphasises differences in social custom and historical progress on the continents of Europe and Asia.

This chapter will therefore explore how this binary relationship corresponded to a break between political liberty, represented by Europe, and authoritarian despotism represented by Asia, where the cases of the Tartars and the Chinese Empire will be crucial. In exploring these issues, this chapter demonstrates how the physical landscape allowed Montesquieu to reinforce this binary view of history. In contrast to the authoritarian nature of Asia, for him Europe stood out as a case where political liberty had the potential to develop. As Christopher Krebs points out, Montesquieu's reading of *De Germania* provided him with a central plank on which to develop his understanding of European history as being closely intertwined with political liberty.[47] Drawing on Tacitus' argument, Montesquieu depicted the early inhabitants of

[44] Sebastiani, *The Scottish Enlightenment*, 25.
[45] *Ibid*., 25.
[46] Shirley A. Roe, 'Biology, atheism, and politics in eighteenth-century France', in *Biology and Ideology: From Descartes to Dawkins*, ed. Denis R. Alexander and Ronald L. Numbers (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 2000), 36-60.
[47] Christopher Krebs, *A Most Dangerous Book: Tacitus's Germania from the Roman Empire to the Third Reich* (New York: W.W. Norton & Company, 2012), 161.

Northern Europe as fostering an open style of government based on freedom and deliberation. In order to demonstrate the significance of this point, attention will then be turned to two examples where Montesquieu examined how extreme climates eroded political liberty. Analysing these cases alongside his account of the climate, this first half will demonstrate how Montesquieu's explanation of physical geography allowed him to divide the globe into certain areas and to explore their ability to progress.

In the second half of this chapter attention will be on the way physical geography played out in his examination of the rise of commerce in Book Twenty-One. Here, the focus will be on the way Montesquieu's explanation emphasised the role of physical geography in the economic development of particular societies around the world. As will be shown, his account of the trading histories of Europe was driven in part by the role of the climate and the way in which this influenced cultural custom. Montesquieu's account of Germanic migration to the south, it will be argued, informed his view of commercial relations within Europe. Seen in the overall context of this thesis, this distinction between northern and southern European economic and cultural progress played a crucial part in how individuals such as Adam Ferguson understood its societal development. In addition to this, it will be shown how Montesquieu's examination of the early trading links between Europe and the Indian subcontinent reinforced the place of physical geography as having a significant role in his account of the rise of commercial society. Drawing attention to his analysis of the differences in marine technology between Europe and the Indian subcontinent, this chapter will further show how the two key factors of physical geography and climate combined to present this imbalance as the result of how the technical knowledge available to each society related to the question of race and climate. Doing so, it will demonstrate how Montesquieu's emphasis on the impact of extreme climates on the Indian subcontinent was connected with his emphasis on their lack of progress in navigating the oceans. Thus the argument in this section links directly to the concerns examined in the first section by demonstrating the way he saw physical geography and the climate as being central factors in societal progress.

At the heart of this chapter is an explanation for stadial theory which depicts physical geography as a central factor in Montesquieu's account of historical progress. Through seeing *L'esprit de lois* in these terms, this chapter will argue that it provided a fundamental basis on which to understand the contributions of the Scottish Enlightenment stadial theorists examined in this thesis.

## Physical Geography

The emergence of the Scottish Enlightenment in the middle decades of the eighteenth-century brought with it a plethora of opinions and ideas which shaped intellectual debate in Europe up to the end of the century. One significant feature of the Scottish Enlightenment was its explanation for societal progress, in which history was said to consist of certain stages of historical development characterised by certain phases of social structure. A central impetus for this was the work of Charles-Louis de Secondat, or Montesquieu.[48] Within his *L'esprit de lois*, Montesquieu gave an account of historical progress in which the organisation of society was driven by the relationship between certain factors:

> I began by examining men, and I believed that, amidst the infinite diversity of laws and mores, they were not led by their fancies alone. I have set down the principles, and I have seen particular cases conform to them as if by themselves, the histories of all nations being but their consequences, and each particular law connecting with another law or dependent on a more general one.[49]

Elaborating on these words, he provided an explanation for societal development that emphasised the way social structures were the result of a precise pattern of cultural and civil developments. Doing so, Montesquieu explained the historical process as being the outcome of a combination of the variables outlined in the introduction. In this way, the account of stadial theory provided in *L'esprit de lois* took historical development to be dependent on the relationship between, on the one hand, religion and customs, and on the other, climate and physical geography. Thus, instead of understanding history in terms of contingency and a pragmatic response to situations, Montesquieu's explanation focused on the way it was intimately related to the question of cultural character.[50]

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[48] His full title being Charles-Louis de Secondat, Baron de La Brède et de Montesquieu. For a general account of Montesquieu's life, see Robert Shackleton, *Montesquieu: A Critical Biography* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1961).

[49] Charles-Louis de Secondat, Baron de Montesquieu, *L'esprit de lois*, ed. Anne M. Cohler, Carolyn Basia Miller & Harold Samuel Stone (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1989), xliii.

[50] For an alternative contemporary understanding of history, see Nicholas Phillipson, *Hume* (London: Weidenfield & Nicolson, 1989), especially Chapters Five and Six. See also David Hume, *History of England: from the Invasion of Julius Caesar to The Revolution in 1688 in Six Volumes*, ed. W.B. Todd (Indianapolis: Liberty Fund, 1983).

In Part Three of *L'esprit de lois*, Montesquieu gave an account of the historical process in which the cumulative effects of both the physical terrain and the climate conditioned social progress. Within the 1950 Nagel edition used by Sebastiani, Montesquieu's wording expressed a concern with how human behaviour was directly influenced by factors as diverse as the climate and cultural customs: "Many things govern men: climate, religion, laws, the maxims of the government, examples of past things, mores, manners: a general spirit is formed as a result."[51] Put in these terms, this edition highlights the way Montesquieu saw these influences as being responsible for informing the cultural values of a society and conditioning the individual's conduct.

In Book Fourteen of *L'esprit de lois*, Montesquieu examined the role of the climate, emphasising in the opening chapter the way it led to variations in attitude and behaviour: "If it is true that the character of the spirit and the passions of the heart are extremely different in the various climates, laws should be relative to the differences in these passions and to the differences in these characters."[52] Here, the emphasis was on the way in which the climate influenced the behaviour of an individual and the laws governing their society. Montesquieu therefore aimed to identify and pinpoint these variations that existed between different social structures around the globe and to relate them to the issue of historical progress. In Chapter Two, he further examined this in relation to biological explanations for how and why the climate had such a considerable impact on the character of an individual. Focusing on the circulation of blood around the human body, Montesquieu noted the way variations in temperature caused a spring in the fibres:

> Cold air contracts the extremities of the body's surface fibers; this increases their spring and favors the return of blood from the extremities of the heart. It shortens these same fibers, therefore, it increases their strength in this way too. Hot air, by contrast, relaxes these extremities of the fibers and lengthens them; therefore, it decreases their strength and their spring.[53]

Exploring the effect of the climate on muscles, Montesquieu argued that the climate altered certain mechanisms within the human body in terms of circulation. This meant that at lower temperatures the blood supply was restricted, leading to an increase in rigidity, whilst warmer climatic conditions caused a relaxation of the muscles and the development of a languid

[51] Montesquieu, *L'esprit de lois* (1748), in *Oeuvres completes de Montesquieu, vol. 1*, ed. Andre Masson (Paris: Nagel, 1950). Cited in Sebastiani, *The Scottish Enlightenment*, 25.
[52] Montesquieu, *L'esprit de lois*, 229.
[53] *Ibid*., 231.

character. Read in the context of the opening chapter of the book, Montesquieu's point was that the social and moral characteristics of a society were also directly regulated by the climate. A significant dimension to this argument was his understanding of the issue of race. In order to appreciate this relationship between the concepts of climate and race within *L'esprit de lois*, it is necessary to briefly compare his ideas with the works of both Buffon and Bodin. Doing so will demonstrate Montesquieu's unique contribution to debates surrounding social structure.

Montesquieu's understanding of the impact of climate on racial difference was influenced by developments in the human sciences and in particular in the area of human reproduction. Aside from his account, another significant discussion of the role of the climate was in the work of the French Naturalist Georges-Louis LeClerc, Comte de Buffon. Published one year after *L'esprit de lois*, in 1749, *Histoire Naturelles* provided an explanation of the way in which historical climatic conditions in different parts of the globe had led to the development of different races.[54] Within his text, Buffon explained how variations in climate and the resulting impact on diet had given rise to differences in physical appearance among the human population.

> Many ages might perhaps elapse, before a white race would become altogether black; but there is a probability that, in time, a white people, transported from the north to the equator, would experience that change, especially if they were to change their manners, and to feed solely on the productions of the warm climate.[55]

Rejecting providential accounts for human variation, both authors pursued historical explanations which took the distinctions between different groups of individuals as resulting from environmental conditioning. Alongside contemporary arguments for the importance of climatic determinism, a secondary source for Montesquieu's account of historical progress was the work of the sixteenth-century political theorist, Jean Bodin.

Throughout Part Three of *L'esprit de lois*, Montesquieu outlined his understanding of physical geography and climate. In Book Eighteen, he paid particular attention to the terrain. Although only one factor in the historical process, it was a focal point for explaining how social formation occurred. As a precursor to Montesquieu's account, in his *Les Six livres de la République,* Bodin's discussion of the climate focused on the way an individual's behaviour

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[55] Georges-Louis LeClerc, Comte de Buffon, *Histoire Naturelle, Generale et Particuliere, avec la description due cabinet du roy* (Paris: LiImprimerie Royale, 1749-89), 137-8.

varied in different temperate zones according to the conditions in which they were placed.[56] Developing this argument, he outlined the Tripartite System, dividing the globe into different geographic areas: the frigid, temperate and torrid zones.[57] Through demonstrating his preference for mild climates, he signalled that a balance between the extremes of heat and coldness was essential in order for a society to advance.

> If one turns from the microcosm to the macrocosm, it follows by parity of argument that the commonwealth should have a territory which is large enough, and sufficiently fertile and well stocked, to feed and clothe its inhabitants. It should have a mild and equable climate, and an adequate supply of good water for health.[58]

Consistent with Bodin's argument, the account of physical geography provided in *L'esprit de lois* centred on the way certain aspects of the physical landscape were integral to the functioning of a society. At the beginning of Book Eighteen, Montesquieu presented a picture of historical progress in which variations in political behaviour and governing structure were informed by the character of the terrain. In particular, the emphasis on the fertility of soil enabled Montesquieu to make a fundamental distinction between the continents of Europe and central Asia. Building on the traditional typology of political institutions, he sought to demonstrate how the character of a landscape encouraged the emergence of certain types of political structure.[59] Distinguishing between two types of physical landscape, he identified certain governing tendencies inherent in each. On the one hand, "The fertile countries have plains where one can dispute nothing with the stronger man: therefore, one submits to him; and, when one has submitted to him, the spirit of liberty cannot return; the goods of the countryside are a guarantee of faithfulness".[60] Here, he argued that a lack of variation of landscape made it harder for the population to resist either an internal power or an external invading force. On the other hand, societies located in mountainous regions found it easier to defend themselves from attack simply because the physical terrain provided them with suitable cover: "Liberty, that is, the government they enjoy, is the only good worth defending. Therefore, it reigns more frequently in mountainous and difficult countries than those which nature seems to have favoured more."[61] Making a connection between political liberty and

[56] Jean Bodin, *Six Books of the Commonwealth*, ed. M.J. Tooley (Oxford: Basil Blackwell, 1967).

[57] Jonathan Scott, *When the Waves Ruled Britannia – Geography and Political Identities, 1500-1800* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2011), 157.

[58] Bodin, *Six Books of the Commonwealth*, 4.

[59] Sebastiani, *The Scottish Enlightenment*, 25.

[60] Montesquieu, *L'esprit de lois,* 286.

[61] *Ibid*., 286.

mountainous regions, Montesquieu presented the landscape as a major factor in the way certain societies developed. Doing so, he went on to make a fundamental argument about the differences in the historical progress of societies in Europe as compared with central Asia At the heart of his argument was the view that a general divergence had taken place in terms of the process of social formation on the two continents. Although accepting that both had begun as pastoral societies, for Montesquieu developments in central Asia had driven the Tartars into the condition of political slavery. Consequently, societies in the region were characterised as despotic. Here, the place of physical geography allowed him to explain the authoritarian conditions that underlay Tartar society with reference to the poor climate and the inability to grow crops. Thus the break between Europe and Asia rested on Montesquieu's understanding of the relationship between political ideas and environmental conditions. Through this, he developed a more substantive point about progress on the two continents in relation to the spread of political liberty, namely that the process had only occurred in one place and not the other: "The peoples of northern Europe have conquered as free men; the peoples of northern Asia have conquered as slaves and have been victorious only for a master."[62] Seen in the context of his understanding of central Asia, such a view took the persistence of political slavery to be a natural outcome of the Tartars' cultural conditioning. The character of Montesquieu's depiction of the Tartars rested on both a cultural argument about military power and the physical landscape of the region. As he noted:

> …. the Tartar people, Asia's natural conquerors, have become slaves themselves. They constantly conquer southern Asia, they form empires; but the part of the conquering nation that remains in this country is subject to a great master, who is despotic in the south, who also wants to be so in the north and who, with arbitrary power over the conquered subjects, claims it also over the conquering subjects. This can be seen today in that vast country called Chinese Tartary.[63]

A crucial source for Adam Ferguson's description of the Tartars in his *An Essay on the History of Civil Society*, Montesquieu's account looked to their aggressive tactics as a sign of their despotism.[64] Modifying his understanding of the relationship between the terrain and politics outlined in Chapter Two of Book Eighteen, Montesquieu depicted the rise of the Tartars as exemplifying a break between the political liberty found in Europe and the authoritarian

[62] *Ibid*., 282.
[63] *Ibid*., 282.
[64] Iain McDaniel, *Adam Ferguson in the Scottish Enlightenment: The Roman Past and Europe's Future* (Cambridge, Massachusetts: Harvard University Press, 2013), 89.

despotic societies of Central Asia.[65] Consistent with his examination of Tartary, Montesquieu also considered the historical progress of China and how it differed substantially from that of Europe. As a result, his account of the Chinese empire shared certain similarities with Aristotle in his *Politics,* and was rooted in a shared concern with political liberty.[66] For Aristotle, the societies of Asia were characterised as barbarian and slavish.[67] Within *L'espirit de lois*, Montesquieu amalgamated this view of the continent with his 'Science of Politics', and stressed the competing influences of location, climate and mores on the progress of a society. Here, the discussion touched on the role of cultural custom and in particular the question of gender relations. Substituting the term 'Asiatic' for 'East', Montesquieu identified the social attitudes towards females as being typical of the region.

> In the various states of the East, the mores are purer as the enclosure of women is stricter …. The greater their means, the more they are in a position to keep women in a strict enclosure and prevent them from returning to society. This is why women have such admirable mores in the empires of the Turks, Persians, Moguls, China and Japan.[68]

Central to Montesquieu's discussion of gender relations in China was the authoritarian nature of the society and how this infiltrated all aspects of life. As Johnathan Spence points out, the account presented in *L'esprit de lois* departed substantially from the more positive depictions offered by the Jesuit sources he drew on.[69] Making a distinction between monarchical and despotic forms of government, Montesquieu rejected these earlier views: "Our missionaries speak of the vast empire of China as of an admirable government, in whose principle intermingle fear, honor, and virtue. …. I do not know how one can speak of honor among peoples who can be made to do nothing without beatings."[70] For him, physical geography played a central role in explaining why China's despotic form of government arose, and how this was related to the weakness of the emperor. Furthermore, unlike other examples examined in *L'esprit de lois*, for Montesquieu the climate played a limited role in China's

[65] McDaniel, *Adam Ferguson*, 88.

[66] Sharon Krouse, "Despotism in the *Spirit of Laws*", in *Montesquieu's Science of Politics: Essays on The Spirit of Laws,* ed. David W. Carrithers, Michael Mosher and Paul Rahe (Oxford: Rowman & Littlefield, 2001), 231-71, 249.

[67] Aristotle, *The Politics and The Constitution of Athens*, ed. Steven Everson (Cambridge, Cambridge University Press, 1996), 84, [1285al17].

[68] Montesquieu, *L'esprit de lois*, 271.

[69] Jonathan Spence, *The Chan's Great Continent: China in Western Minds* (London: Penguin, 1998), 92.

[70] Montesquieu, *L'esprit de lois,* 126-7.

development, relating only to the issue of population growth.[71] Within his *Lectures on Jurisprudence*, Adam Smith would use similar arguments to bolster his claim about soil fertility.[72] Yet here the point was to reinforce the case for Chinese despotism. When contrasted with Europe, the example of China strengthened Montesquieu's case for a fundamental difference in the historical progress of Europe as compared with Asia. Here, physical geography became the backdrop for an examination of the varying forms of political organisation between the two continents, which stressed the cultural character of those differences.

Alongside his description of historical progress on the Asian continent, in *L'esprit de lois* Montesquieu presented a detailed explanation for the rise of European society. In this context, his account of Europe was intertwined with a concern for the emergence of political liberty, rooted in an appreciation of how the development of institutional structures was fundamental to this historical process.[73] Within Book One of *L'esprit de lois*, he examined the relationship between human reason and political structure, and in particular the legal code: "Law in general is human reason insofar as it governs all the peoples of the earth; and the political and civil laws of each nation should be only the particular cases to which human reason is applied."[74] Stated in these terms, Montesquieu's point was that a society's legal code corresponded to the individual's ability to rationally interpret the law. Seen in the context of the above discussion, his understanding of this issue was connected to the way he saw the role of climate and cultural mores in informing social structure.[75] This concern with the relationship between human understanding and civil law played a fundamental role in Montesquieu's account of the rise of European society.

One of the significant ways in which *L'esprit de lois* has tended to be understood is as part of an ongoing debate about French history. Here, Montesquieu's argument sided with the idea that the early inhabitants of France had originally descended from a Germanic tribe who

[71] *Ibid*., 127.

[72] Adam Smith, *Lectures on Jurisprudence*, ed. R.L. Meek, D.D. Raphael, and P.G. Stein, (Indianapolis: Liberty Fund, 1982), 444.

[74] Montesquieu, *L'esprit de lois*, 8.

[75] *Ibid*., 9.

had migrated from the lower Rhine.[76] In making his case, Montesquieu drew on the work of the Roman author and senator, Cornelius Tacitus. Within the *Germania*, Tacitus presented an account of the early German inhabitants which emphasised their simplistic lifestyle and heroic qualities.[77] A significant part of his argument rested on the way Tacitus linked their physiognomic features with those of other northern European tribes. One of the main contributing factors in this context was the temperate climate and the fertile soil. In a key chapter of the text, Tacitus described how the lack of natural resources available in the region forced the Germanic tribes to develop simple low-tech weaponry.[78] This sense of the modest material life of the inhabitants was contrasted with their associated moral qualities. Here the ideas of simplicity and military valour were interlaced with arguments about sexual restraint and the attitude towards adultery.[79] Seen in the context of the eighteenth-century, Tacitus's argument was a central component of debates surrounding the early history of Europe.[80] Significantly, these discussions touched on fundamental arguments around both the cultural and physical boundaries of European identity. Montesquieu's intervention in these debates proved highly significant as he not only revised existing assumptions around the early development of society in Europe, but crucially made the historical debate over its northern half into an argument about the origins of political liberty. Rather than seeing northern Europe as wild and uncivilised, Montesquieu's account of the region turned it into the cradle of freedom.[81] For Montesquieu, Tacitus provided a way of seeing Germanic liberty as derived from the internal consultative process focused on deliberation and self-government.

Consistent with Tacitus' argument, in *L'esprit de lois*, Montesquieu sought to demonstrate how and why the merits of early Germanic society were so central to the progress of both governing institutions and political liberty in Europe. As part of his argument, Montesquieu portrayed the overrunning of the Roman Empire as a central turning point for the spread of a consultative style of politics.[82] In contrast to the despotic temperament underlying societies in central Asia, in Europe, politics was marked by deliberation and debate:

[76] Krebs, *A Most Dangerous Book*, 158.

[77] *Ibid*., 44-49.
[78] Tacitus, De 'Germania', in *Dialogus by Tacitus*, ed. E. Capps, T.E. Page and W.H.D. Ross (London: Heinemann, 1920), 271-2.
[79] Krebs, *A Most Dangerous Book*, 46.
[80] *Ibid*., 46.
[81] *Ibid*., 161.
[82] Montesquieu, *L'esprit de lois*, 167.

> When they were in Germany, the whole nation could be assembled. When they dispersed during the conquest, they could no longer assemble. Nevertheless, the nation had to deliberate on its business as it had done before the conquest; it did so by representatives.[83]

Here, participation and dialogue were contrasted with the despotism and arbitrary rule found in central Asia. Characterising early Germanic society in this way, Montesquieu was able to develop an account of European history which drew on Tacitus in order to embellish a specific argument around the significance of historical progress and the civil-legal code. In this context Montesquieu's understanding of the climate was crucial.

Within *L'esprit de lois*, Montesquieu's discussion of the progress of Germanic society rested in part on the connection between two distinct relationships. Exploring this association provides a clue to the way he understood physical geography's role in societal development. On the one hand, there was his focus on the link between climate and cultural custom which allowed him to examine how different climatic conditions affected human conduct, on the other hand, the connection between social mores and civil law and the way this stimulated changes to the legal status of individuals. In Book Eighteen, Montesquieu focused his attention on the changes that occurred in Germanic society as they occupied the former lands of the Roman Empire. Here his focus was on the issue of property rights in relation to gender. Whereas, prior to expansion, Germanic civil-legal code gave the right of inheritance only to male heirs, once the Germans had moved into new lands, a change in cultural attitude occurred with respect to property ownership:

> When the Franks lived in Germany, their goods were slaves, herds, horses, arms, etc. The house and the small portion of land adjoining it were naturally given to the male children who were to live there. But, when the Franks had acquired extensive lands after the conquest, it was found harsh that the daughters and their children could not have a share. A usage was introduced which permitted the father to recall his daughter and his daughter's children. The law was silenced, and these sorts of recalls must have been common because formulas were made for them.[84]

Seen in the context of his views regarding race and climate, Montesquieu's depiction of the changes in Germanic laws ought to be seen in relation to his understanding of human behaviour in temperate conditions. In *L'esprit de lois*, his argument rested on the emphasis placed on how

[83] *Ibid*., 167.

[84] *Ibid*., 297.

fibres and blood circulation functioned in cold climates, and the way this allowed for a more rational form of conduct.[85] This point can also be seen in his description in Chapter Three of Book Fourteen, in his discussion of Northern European society: "In the time of the Romans, the peoples of northern Europe lived without arts, almost without laws, and still, with only the good sense connected with the coarse fibers of these climates."[86] Here, he emphasised the ability of the Germans to organise their society in spite of a lack of well defined civil law. In explaining this, he drew attention to the way the climate conditioned both the human body and the political character of the society.[87] To better understand this point, a contrast can be made with the description of Germanic migration to southern Europe. In Chapter Fourteen of the same book, he noted:

> But when a Germanic nation moved to Spain, the climate required quite different laws. The laws of the Visigoths prohibited doctors from bleeding a *freeborn* woman except in the presence of her father or mother, her brother, her son, or her uncle. The imagination of the peoples was fired, that of the legislators was likewise ignited; the law suspected everything in a people capable of suspecting everything.[88]

Using this argument that attitudes towards gender relations among the Germanic tribes were characterised as relatively equal, Montesquieu emphasised how the warmer climate influenced a change in their civil laws when they migrated to Spain. Deploying the same explanation of the power of the climate on human conduct, he described how the new civil-legal code curtailed female liberty out of a concern for temptation. Here, cultural customs were seen to adapt to the relaxing of moral standards. This same socialisation process also arose in Montesquieu's account of India. As in the case of Spain, the intense climatic conditions were seen to diminish the society's moral and political temperament.

Rather than understanding the account of India in terms of a perceived break in the historical progress of the continents of Europe and Asia, Montesquieu's analysis of the region should be viewed as a continuation of his discussion of the climate's role in societal progress.[89] Here, the description given in *L'esprit de lois* ought to be seen as part of his ongoing investigation into the influence of customs and social mores on the political character of a

[85] *Ibid*., 231.
[86] *Ibid*., 235.
[87] Krebs, *A Most Dangerous Book*, 160-1.
[88] Montesquieu, *L'esprit de lois*, 243.

[89] McDaniel, *Adam Ferguson*, 88.

society. Furthermore, his understanding of India should be understood alongside his examination of the cultural changes that took place in the Germanic tribes once they migrated to Spain. The extreme climatic conditions of the subcontinent had eroded the moral character of Indian society and weakened their resolve.[90] As with his description of events in Spain, Montesquieu drew attention to the weak disposition of the Indian population in which their timidity and lively imagination made them very wary of sudden changes in fortune: "The same delicacy of organs that makes them fear death serves also to make them dread a thousand things more than death. The same sensitivity makes the Indians both flee all perils and brave them all."[91] In explaining this phenomenon, Montesquieu drew attention to the issue of courage and moral character. Here, the description of the Indians' temperament drove an argument for benevolence and colonisation: "As a good education is more necessary to children than to those of mature spirit, so the peoples of these climates have greater need of a wise legislator than the peoples of our own."[92] Comparing the Indian population to European children, Montesquieu argued for the necessity of a 'wise legislator' to combat the deficiencies within Indian society. This emphasis on the incapability of self-rule ought to be seen in contrast to his description of the Germanic tribes of northern Europe and in particular the emphasis on the idea of self-government and the emergence of consultative assemblies.[93] Holding Montesquieu's account of India together was an embedded idea of the climate as a determining force within its historical progress. In this way, Montesquieu worked into his account of societal development an understanding which aimed to explain the variations in historical progress in terms of a comparative racial framework. Crucially, this would give Scottish Enlightenment writers a way to explain the history of India in relation to the particular climatic conditions of the region.[94]

Significantly, this understanding of *L'esprit de lois* placed Montesquieu's view of India in direct contrast to his account of the Germanic tribes of central Europe. Doing so, it provided a way of seeing how Montesquieu explained the relationship between physical geography and climate within his account of stadial theory. Such a view also extends to his argument about the contradictions between the political liberty found in Europe and the authoritarian despotisms which characterised Asia, by emphasising how climatic conditions and social

[90] Montesquieu, *L'esprit de lois*, 235.
[91] *Ibid*., 243
[92] *Ibid*., 235.
[93] *Ibid*., 167.
[94] Adam Ferguson, *An Essay on the History of Civil Society,* ed. Fania Oz-Satzberger (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1995), 115.

customs informed the political character of societies. Yet Montesquieu's concern with climate was not the only place in which physical geography was a significant factor in his account of historical progress. Within Book Twenty One of *L'esprit de lois*, physical geography also played a central role in allowing him to identify and explain the consequences brought about by the emergence of European commercial society. At the start of the book, Montesquieu stated: "Though commerce is subject to great revolutions, it can happen that certain physical causes such as the quality of the terrain or of the climate fix its nature forever."[95] Physical geography therefore contributed to both the cultural character of a society whilst anchoring its politics and economic opportunities to one location. In this way, trade and the exchange of goods were shaped by the limitations of the landscape. To better understand the way these restrictions affected commercial relations it is first necessary to consider two examples within Book Twenty One, where physical geography played a role in Montesquieu's account of Europe's economic progress. On the one hand, his account of Europe, and on the other hand his ideas concerning the historic trade between European societies and between Europe and the Indian subcontinent.

Admitting an imbalance between the northern and southern regions of Europe, Montesquieu explored the way in which this had been historically accompanied by cultural difference: "There is a kind of balance in Europe between the nations of the South and those of the North. The first have all sorts of the comforts of life and few needs; the second have many needs and few of the comforts of life."[96] Drawing attention to these differences, Montesquieu appealed to the idea of the mutual interest in the promotion of trade between the two regions. Seen in the context of his discussion surrounding cultural custom, Montesquieu's emphasis on the differences between northern and southern Europe reveals the way he associated commercial relations with overcoming social and cultural boundaries. Thus, the place of physical geography in these discussions underlined his appreciation of the differences in historical progress around the globe.

Following his discussion of Europe, Montesquieu turned his attention to India. Here he noted how the climate played a substantial role in deterring the development of trade between Europe and the subcontinent: "This is not in contradiction with what I have said about our commerce in the Indies; the difference in climates is so extreme that there is no relation between

[95] Montesquieu, *L'esprit de lois*, 354.
[96] *Ibid*., 355.

their needs and ours."[97] Yet his admission in the opening chapter of the book, that trade between Europe and the subcontinent had occurred since the ancient era, was a significant factor in how he understood the role of commercial relations with reference to historical progress. Drawing on the example of the Roman Empire's connections with India, he argued: "Today we engage in commerce with the Indies only through the silver we send there. The Romans took about fifty million sesterces there every year. Just as with our silver today, this silver was converted into commodities that they brought back to the West."[98] Montesquieu's concern with the interaction between different societies revealed the extent to which he saw commercial relations as dependent on the ability to physically access other internal markets. One key issue here was the transportation of goods.

Consistent with his examination of commercial relations between Europe and Asia, Montesquieu turned his attention to river systems as a vital part of intercontinental trade. As Adam Smith would go on to emphasise in his *The Wealth of Nations*, navigation of both the Indus and Oxus was central to this process: "Thus, under the kings of Syria and of Bactria, commodities from southern India passed by way of the Indus, the Oxus, and the Caspian Sea."[99] A significant part of his analysis was the way he related a society's commercial success to developments in marine technology. Aside from rivers, Montesquieu also considered the role of ocean-based trade, and how this affected the progress of a society. In chapter six, he highlighted how technological innovation in shipbuilding affected the spread of commerce. Drawing a comparison between the hull designs of Greek and Roman ships and their Indian counterparts, Montesquieu identified technological reasons to explain why India could not compete. Seen in relation to his account of the climate in Book Fourteen, Montesquieu's understanding of developments in naval technology drew on his ideas surrounding education and race.[100] This point is crucial in the understanding of the role of physical geography in his explanation for stadial theory in terms of demonstrating how variations in technological progress were linked to cultural mores. As he explained, the design of Greek and Roman hulls ensured that they were more versatile compared with those of the Indian ships.

> This slowness of the Indians ships, which, in an equal time, could go but a third of the distance covered by the Greek and Roman ships, can be explained by what we see today

[97] *Ibid*., 356.
[98] *Ibid*., 354.
[99] *Ibid*., 385.
[100] *Ibid*., 235.

> in our sailing. The Indian ships made of rushes drew less water than the Greek and Roman vessels made of wood joined with iron.[101]

For Montesquieu, the significance of these differences lay in the fact that the ability to navigate and therefore trade across seas and oceans required certain technological advances to have taken place. Seen in the context of his discussion of commercial relations, this point reveals the way he saw these differences as influencing a society's capability to establish trade links. Whilst identifying why societies in Europe had the practical ability to send commercial missions to the Asian continent and establish relations there, Montesquieu's lack of discussion of why societies in Asia were not able to reciprocate demonstrated how his understanding of physical geography signified the way he saw the cultural consequence of both physical geography and climate as providing societies on the European continent with the tools to advance further compared with other societies around the world. What defined his account of historical progress, therefore, was an appreciation of how politics, economics and culture were conditioned by a tapestry of variables. Montesquieu's discussion of technological progress therefore took the role of climate and physical geography to combine with other factors, for example political structure, in stimulating cultural advancement. In this way, it was the climate's conditioning of the human mind and the consequences that it had for historical progress which made the place of physical geography so important within *L'esprit de lois.*

Seen in the overall context of the chapter, Montesquieu's explanation for the rise of commerce in Europe highlighted the way he took the commercial opportunities of a society to be dictated by both their physical location and their ability to compensate for the limitations imposed on them. This emphasis in *L'esprit de lois* on the fundamental differences in the historical development of societies in Europe and Asia ought therefore to be seen not just in terms of the emergence of political institutions but also in the development of the cultural values that predominated. Seen in this light, European success in establishing commercial society was due in part to its temperate climate and fertile soil. Whilst the emphasis on the development of political institutions within *L'esprit de lois* was a central tenet of Montesquieu's overall account of stadial theory, the place of physical geography also provides

[101] *Ibid.*, 360.

an insight into how these differences extended to questions of cultural and technological progress.

## Conclusion

Through examining certain key themes within *L'esprit de lois*, this chapter has discussed the place of physical geography in Montesquieu's understanding of historical progress. Doing so, it has revealed how such depictions were tied to an explanation for societal progress on the two continents of Europe and Asia which connected them to the break between political liberty and despotic authoritarianism. Seen within this context, the subsequent stadial theory accounts of historical progress of the Scottish Enlightenment engaged with and re-examined Montesquieu's fundamental claims. As will be demonstrated below, each of the authors took seriously the arguments within *L'esprit de lois* in order to develop their own accounts of societal progress. Furthermore, through analysing key discussions within *L'esprit de lois*, this chapter underlined the importance of both the relationship between climate and race on the one hand, and his account of physical geography on the other. Through using the case studies of, firstly, Europe and Central Asia, and secondly, the accounts of Spain and India, it was demonstrated how Montesquieu depicted different climates and physical geographies as having a major impact on societal custom and the historical progress of a society. In the second half of this chapter this discussion was used to explore his account of the rise of commerce. In doing so, it was demonstrated how his emphasis on the peculiar physical geography and climate of Europe provided a basis on which he could assert its predominance over the Indian subcontinent. Therefore, the view of the relationship between physical geography and historical development outlined in *L'esprit de lois* was rooted in an understanding of how cultural values and social mores drove differences in societal progress.

Montesquieu's explanation of historical progress provided the Scottish Enlightenment exponents of stadial theory with a central argument on which to draw. Through engaging with *L'esprit de lois*, each of the authors examined in this thesis took on board Montesquieu's views regarding the significance of physical geography to social structure. As a result, they all developed explanations for historical progress that depicted the terrain as a major factor behind differences in the organisation and cultural attitudes of a society. For individuals such as Adam Ferguson, the discussion of physical geography in *L'esprit de lois* provided grounds for an uncertainty regarding the rise of commercial society. Likewise, in *Sketches of the History of Man*, Kames would find fault with the new social order through using physical geography as a springboard for a broadly sceptical view of historical progress. This kind of moralistic vision

would be challenged by John Millar in *The Origins and Distinction of Ranks*, who would use physical geography to identify adaptations in social formation as a sign of societal progress. This was even more the case with Adam Smith in the *Lectures on Jurisprudence*, where physical geography signified 'local' differences in societal progress. Whilst Smith's account of stadial theory would cut across Montesquieu's essentialist reading of the terrain, the core thrust of the argument outlined in *L'esprit de lois* would remain integral to how Smith saw the character of historical progress. As a consequence, Montesquieu's understanding of physical geography represented a major intervention in eighteenth-century debates surrounding the issue of the organisation of society. Doing so, this thesis reveals the extent to which physical geography played a central role in Montesquieu's complex legacy.

# Physical Geography and Sociability in Adam Ferguson's *An Essay on the History of Civil Society*

## Introduction

Within the Scottish Enlightenment, the work of Adam Ferguson, and in particular his *An Essay on the History of Civil Society*, ranks as one of the most significant contributions to contemporary debate over the emergence of commercial society. Ferguson drew directly from Montesquieu's *L'esprit de lois* in order to construct an account of historical progress.[102] Ferguson's anxieties on commerce have often been misinterpreted as evidence of his 'conservative' political leanings.[103] Evidence for this ambivalence towards commerce has usually been drawn from his attempt to reenergise civic virtue through participating in Militia Debates.[104] For John Pocock, Ferguson's use of Niccolo Machiavelli's work derived from the way it allowed an emphasis on the role of passion and social solidarity in the formation of a cohesive society.[105] As Ferguson made clear in the *Essay*: "Our attachment to one division, or to one sect, seems often to derive much of its force from an animosity conceived to an opposite one."[106] This idea of animosity reflects his emphasis on the way social solidarity found expression in collective identity. In the nineteenth-century, Marx would seize upon Ferguson's comments regarding democracy in Athens as evidence for the historic division of labour.[107] Yet recent scholarship has established a more complex picture, in which his critique of commercial society was linked to a concern with the rise of dictatorship.[108] As a way of combating this, Ferguson looked to the power of social cohesion and civic participation. Furthermore, the idea of animosity reflects his emphasis on social solidarity and its expression

[102] Adam Ferguson, *An Essay on the History of Civil Society*, ed. Fania Oz-Salzberger (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1995).
[103] Iain McDaniel, *Adam Ferguson*, 215.
[104] On Ferguson's participation, see John Robertson, *The Scottish Enlightenment and the Militia Issue* (Glasgow: Bell and Bain, 1985), 200-232.
[105] John Pocock, *The Machiavellian Moment: Florentine Political Thought and the Atlantic Republican Tradition,* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2003), 499.

[106] Ferguson, *Essay*, 21.
[107] Karl Marx, *Capital: A Critique of Political Economy, Volume One*, ed. Ben Fowkes, (London: Penguin Classics, 1990), 474. For a discussion of the problems with Marx's reading of Ferguson, see Iain McDaniel, *Adam Ferguson*, 100.
[108] Iain McDaniel, *Adam Ferguson*.

within a society's collective identity. Through focusing on the place of physical geography, this chapter aims to demonstrate how Ferguson's discussion of the terrain related to the issue of social conduct. Doing so, it will argue that the account of historical development contained within the *Essay* was rooted in the way he understood the terrain to foster certain political ideas which influenced a society's progress.

A central catalyst for Ferguson's argument were the ideas outlined in Montesquieu's *L'esprit de lois*. For Silvia Sebastiani, Montesquieu's work provided a perfect basis on which to examine the organisation and arrangement of different societies according to cultural mores and physical situation.[109] Here physical geography was just one factor with which to explore variations in social formation. A key example of this type of analysis can be seen via the difference in historical progress between Europe and central Asia. Through exploring his engagement with Montesquieu, this chapter will show how Ferguson's view of the region linked the rise of despotism to its physical location. Highlighting his emphasis on the poor agricultural quality of the land and the martial values which underpinned the society, this chapter will demonstrate how Ferguson saw physical geography as a central reason why the Tartars were not able to progress. A link will be made with his 1745 regimental sermon in which he explored the themes of collective behaviour and social cohesion.[110] How this point relates directly to his view of the Tartars will be demonstrated in this thesis.

The relationship between physical geography and social relations was central to Ferguson's account of stadial theory. Yet his views on societal conduct were stimulated by a blending of two distinctive intellectual traditions. Together they form the backdrop to the traditional historiographical debates that have arisen over Ferguson's work. On the one hand, there is the Machiavellian tradition, emphasising civic virtue and patriotism. On the other, there are the ideas of Francis Hutcheson and natural sociability. Combining these two readings of Ferguson, this chapter demonstrates how the account of physical geography within the *Essay* reveals his explanation for variations in social structure across the globe. This combination will be examined using three examples. In the first place, the focus will be on Ferguson's account of historical progress in Europe. Through examining his account of the difference between the northern and southern regions, it will be demonstrated that the relationship between physical

[109] Silvia Sebastiani, *The Scottish Enlightenment: Race, Gender and the Limits of Progress* (New York: Palgrave, 2013), 25.
[110] Adam Ferguson, *A Sermon Preached in the Ersh language to his Majesty's First Highland Regiment of Foot* (London: 1746).

geography and sociability played a vital role in allowing him to highlight significant differences in social attitudes. A second focus will be on Ferguson's account of India. Drawing attention to the similarities between his explanation for the climate and the account provided in *L'esprit de lois* it will be argued that the place of physical geography allowed Ferguson to point to the unique characteristics of societal progress on the subcontinent. As a final example, the case of China will be examined. Here the place of physical geography played a substantial role in the *Essay* in terms of allowing Ferguson to depict large states as more vulnerable to despotism then physically smaller ones.

This chapter will therefore argue that the place of physical geography in Adam Ferguson's account of stadial theory was deeply connected to his concern with sociability in the way variations in human conduct were stimulated by the physical location of a society. In this sense, he gave an explanation for historical progress that cast the environment as having a significant role in the emergence of cultural diversity around the world. In doing so, he contributed substantially to Scottish Enlightenment accounts of societal progress.

## Ferguson and the Scottish Enlightenment

The analysis of social structure in Montesquieu's *L'esprit de lois,* provided Adam Ferguson with key arguments on which to base his account of historical progress. As highlighted in the previous chapter, the place of physical geography and climate were central to Montesquieu's understanding of the development of civil society. Within the *Essay*, one aspect of Ferguson's argument focused on the role of the climate: "It is not in the extremes alone that these varieties of genius may be clearly distinguished. Their continual change keeps pace with the variations of climate with which we suppose them connected."[111] For Ferguson, climatic conditions were an integral feature in explanations for variations in social formation. This emphasis was consistent with Montesquieu's point in Book Fourteen of *L'esprit de lois* about how variations in temperature affected the human body. "Cold air contracts the extremities of the body's surface fibers. Hot air, by contrast, relaxes these extremities of the fibers and lengthens them …. decreases their strength and their spring."[112] This point was echoed in the *Essay*, through Ferguson's discussion of certain types of behavioural patterns prevalent among societies situated in particular locations. Physical geography played a significant role in how he saw this process affecting the emergence of social customs in different parts of the globe.

Ferguson's discussion of the climate was in part motivated by his own interpretation of Montesquieu's account of the terrain. In Book Eighteen, Montesquieu had presented physical geography as having been a crucial factor in determining the nature of historical progress. For him, the character of the landscape fostered the natural tendencies of individuals: "Island peoples are more inclined to liberty than continental peoples. Islands are usually small; one part of the people cannot as easily be employed to oppress the other… and tyranny cannot reach them; conquerors are checked by the sea; islanders are not overrun by conquest"[113] Ferguson developed this point in relation to human sociability and established an account of physical geography that looked to the way in which constraints placed on individuals conditioned how they behaved. Within the *Essay*, he analysed social progress in a number of different settings. Maintaining that societies on small islands were more stable, he argued: "… clusters of islands, a continent divided by many natural barriers, great rivers, ridges of mountains, and arms of the

[111] Ferguson, *Essay*, 111.
[112] Charles-Louis de Secondat, Baron de Montesquieu, *L'esprit de lois*, ed. Anne M. Cohler, Carolyn Basia Miller & Harold Samuel Stone (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1989), 231.
[113] *Ibid*., 289.

sea, are best fitted for becoming the nursery of independent and respectable nations."[114] Doing so, Ferguson stressed the suitability of islands for the development of what he called "independent and respectable nations", pointing to a concern for how different types of environment directly influenced the character of a society. Ferguson's concern with physical size was not only consistent with eighteenth-century understandings of the issue, but reflected the persistent but declining influence of the civic-republican tradition on contemporary debates.[115] Connecting the historical importance of the terrain with the development of social structure, Ferguson took Montesquieu's understanding of the issue and attached an emphasis on civic virtue. Here, Ferguson's point could be read in connection to the idea of moral geography and the way it allowed him to emphasise the relationship between stadial theory and human behaviour.

This concern with the way physical geography influenced social cohesion was also identifiable in Ferguson's analysis of Tartary. Broadly consistent with both Montesquieu and Tacitus, he distinguished between the voluntary nature of social structure in Europe against the despotic, coercive form of cohesion identified in Asia.[116] Here, the place of the terrain offered Ferguson a way of understanding societal progress in Tartary that emphasised its chaotic social structure. Within the *Essay*, Ferguson's aim was to illustrate that climatic differences existed between the two continents in spite of their adjacent latitudinal position:

> Great part of Tartary lies under the same parallels with Greece, Italy, and Spain; but the climates are found to be different; and while the shores, not only of the Mediterranean, but even those of the Atlantic, are favoured with a moderate change and vicissitude of seasons, the eastern parts of Europe, and the northern continent of Asia, are afflicted with all their extremes.[117]

Emphasising the unfavourable natural conditions in the region, Ferguson highlighted the way in which its physical location influenced the behaviour and temperament of the inhabitants. At the heart of this concern, the account focused on the way the physical location of Tartary discouraged the emergence of the type of society seen in Europe. Doing so, he emphasised the role of the climate and the abundance of vermin that afflicted the society.[118] In this light, Ferguson's understanding of Tartary reveals the way he related the role of environmental

[114] Ferguson, *Essay*, 116-7.
[115] Richard Whatmore, ''Neither Masters nor Slaves': Small States and Empire in the Long Eighteenth Century', in *Lineages of Empire: The Historical Roots of British Imperial Thought*, ed. Duncan Kelly (Oxford: Oxford University Press for the Proceedings of the British Academy, no. 155, 2009), 61-2.
[116] McDaniel, *Adam Ferguson*, 88.
[117] Ferguson, *Essay*, 114.
[118] *Ibid*., 114.

factors to social development. Ferguson's explanation of social structure was also outlined in his *Institutes of Moral Philosophy*. Published in 1773, *Institutes* clarified many themes which would become central to Ferguson's argument within the *Essay*. In the text, he drew attention to how differences in the quality of soil led to variations in the manners of individuals and their societal development: "Men being dispersed over the face of the earth, receive the influences of climate, situation and soil."[119] Seen in this context, his explanation for the region's inability to progress was partly driven by a concern for how the environment conditioned the Tartars' social character and the way this fed into their historical progress: "With this unequal distribution of climate, by which the lot, as well as the national character, of the northern Asiatic may be deemed inferior to that of Europeans."[120] Through making a direct link with the climate of Tartary, he placed the agricultural quality of the terrain at the centre of his account of its progress.

In common with the explanation in *L'esprit de lois*, Ferguson argued that the aggressive nature of the Tartars could be explained through their constant migration.[121] This failure to remain in one location was driven by the need to find new pastures. One consequence of this nomadic lifestyle was the social organisation of Tartar society, which in turn fuelled a tight hierarchical political structure. In this sense, the landscape limited the ability of the society to progress. Within the *Essay*, under the section heading 'History of Subordination' he wrote, "If war, for depredation or defence, were the principle object of nations, every tribe would, from its earliest state, aim at the condition of the Tartar hordes … The military leader would supersede the civil magistrate."[122] Through connecting their failure to develop certain civil institutions to the region's environmental conditions, it demonstrates how Ferguson's concern for politics was drawn in part from his understanding of the landscape. Here, Tartar social instability was understood to be rooted in their inability to sustain themselves. This emphasis on the chaotic nature of the regime was born out of an appreciation for the martial values and warrior mentality that permeated the society. Ferguson's attitude to these matters arose from both his stance on the Militia Debates and his own personal experience on the frontline.[123] Prior to taking up his position at Edinburgh University in 1745, Ferguson saw action as the Deputy

[119] Adam Ferguson, *Institutes of Moral Philosophy* (New York: Garland, 1978), 22.
[120] Ferguson, *Essay*, 114.
[121] *Ibid.*, 97.
[122] *Ibid.*, 148.
[123] Robertson, *The Scottish Enlightenment*, 205-6.

Chaplain to the Black Watch at the Battle of Fontenoy in 1745. As part of his duties, he provided moral guidance for the troops, through regimental sermons. One subject about which he preached was the idea of the 'nation'. For him, it was a "united body of men …. sharing all the advantages that arise from such a union… "[124] In drawing on the idea of the 'nation', Ferguson indicated that co-operative behaviour was a central feature of any society. Seen in this context, the place of physical geography within the *Essay* gave him a way of assessing the degree to which social cohesion accompanied historical progress, and how this varied across the globe. In the case of Tartary, the poor quality of soil and the unfavourable climate ensured the society's volatile character. This point was compounded by the restless spirit of the Tartars, which was rooted in their politics:

> There is not disparity of rank, among men in rude ages, sufficient to give their communities the form of legal monarchy; and in a territory of considerable extent, when united under one head, the warlike and turbulent spirit of its inhabitants seems to require the bridle of despotism and military force.[125]

This acknowledgement by Ferguson accepts the difficulty the Tartars had in governing such a large area. Yet for him, it also demonstrates that they did have a level of solidarity. In this way, his discussion of Tartary within the *Essay* reflected his persistent concern with the idea that cohesion and mutual obligation underlay any society. Here, physical geography played a deciding role in allowing him to make substantive claims about the way the terrain influenced this process. In order to see how, attention must be briefly turned to the work of Francis Hutcheson.

Ferguson's reading of Hutcheson provided a crucial basis for his understanding of physical geography. As the example of Tartary demonstrated, in the *Essay*, Ferguson outlined an understanding of human behaviour that was conditioned by the environment. Seen in this light, the place of physical geography was tied to a concern with sociability. Stimulated by the publication of Bernard Mandeville's *Fable of the Bees*, in his *On the Natural Sociability of Mankind*, Hutcheson emphasised how duties and obligations condition the way individuals relate to one another.[126] For Ferguson, this emphasis on the duties placed on an individual

[124] Adam Ferguson, *A Sermon Preached in the Ersh language*, 6. Cited in McDaniel, *Adam Ferguson*, 81-2.
[125] Adam Ferguson, *An Essay on the History of Civil Society*, 101.
[126] Francis Hutcheson, *Logic, Metaphysics and the Natural Sociability of Mankind,* ed. Aaron Garrett (Indianapolis: Liberty Fund, 2006), 195. See also Bernard Mandeville, *The Fable of The Bees*, ed. Philip Harth. (Bungay, United Kingdom: Pelican Books, 1970).

provided him with an account of civil conduct. At the root of his use of Hutcheson's arguments, Ferguson sought to demonstrate how ideas of citizenship and civic participation were foundational to his account of stadial theory. Through examining *Institutes of Moral Philosophy* and *Principles of Moral and Political Science*, it was demonstrated how this idea of conduct related to variations in social formation. Within the *Institutes* these themes of human cooperation and fellowship were used by Ferguson to demonstrate the power of social interaction in determining social organisation. Co-operation and mutual support were identified as crucial to the formation of society: "those who unite their labours for some common purpose, and distribute the burdens of the community according to some rule of instinct or of reason."[127] Drawing on Hutcheson's cosmopolitan argument for 'the love of mankind,' as well as Lord Shaftesbury's emphasis on the role of affection, Ferguson sought to develop an account of social interaction that bound the idea of human desire to civic participation.[128]

Seen in relation to Ferguson's account of the differences between the continents of Europe and Asia, this dual deployment of both the language of civic virtue and natural sociability marked a fundamental difference in the way he used physical geography in the two contexts. Ferguson attributed part of Europe's societal progress to the physically small, generally independent states which could call on the idea of civic patriotism.[129] In order to appreciate this, the focus must be on his exploration of the duties bestowed on citizens' societies in Europe compared with the obligations that individual Tartars were expected to uphold. Within the E*ssay*, he observed

> The small republics of Greece, indeed, by their subdivisions, and the balance of their power, found almost in every village the object of nations. Every little district was a nursery of excellent men, and what is now the wretched corner of a great empire, was the field on which mankind have reaped their principal honours.[130]

Through drawing attention to the physical size and administrative composition of the Greek states, Ferguson was able to emphasise the idea of participation out of a duty towards

[127] Adam Ferguson, *Institutes*, 22.
[128] Iain McDaniel, 'Unsocial Sociability in the Scottish Enlightenment: Ferguson and Kames on war, sociability and the foundations of patriotism', in *History of European Ideas*, 2015, 664-5. See also Anthony Ashley Cooper, Third Earl of Shaftesbury, *Characteristics of Men, Manners, Opinions, Times*, ed. Lawrence E. Klein (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1999), 56. Cited in McDaniel, *Adam Ferguson*, 69-70.
[129] Richard Whatmore, ''Neither Masters nor Slaves': Small States and Empire in the Long Eighteenth Century', 62.
[130] Ferguson, *Essay*, 61.

society. Here, the place of physical geography was crucial in the reinforcement of civic identity and the notion of identifying with a particular location. Yet in contrast, the case of Tartary reveals that he was concerned with the unsuitability of the terrain for agricultural production. Consequently, this forced him to seek an alternative explanation for social cohesion. Here, the idea of natural sociability drawn from the works of Hutcheson and Shaftesbury became vital. Through utilising these types of argument, Ferguson was able to examine the nature of political instability in Tartar society.

This concern with social stability dominated Ferguson's understanding of historical progress. Indeed, his use of both the ideas of natural sociability and civic virtue were rooted in the need for political stability in the face of either domestic or foreign threats. As well as this, he looked to the way cultural customs varied in different locations across the globe and how they were influenced by the terrain. Here, physical geography played a fundamental role in allowing him to distinguish between the processes of social development which occurred in northern Europe. A good example of this was in Ferguson's account of Lapland. Discussions of the region formed a part of Scottish Enlightenment accounts of societal progress, illustrating the way certain environmental factors had the potential to limit the versatility of a social structure.

> The Laplander, on the contrary, like the associate of his climate is hardy, indefatigable, and patient of famine; dull rather than tame; serviceable in a particular tract; and incapable of change. Whole nations continue from age to age in the same condition, and, with immoveable phlegm, submit to the appellations of *Dane*, or *Swede*, or of Muscovite, according to the land they inhabit; and suffer their country to be severed like a common, by the line on which those nations have traced their limits of empire.[131]

Through understanding that the climate served a pivotal role, the discussion concentrated on the way in which the extreme conditions hardened the inhabitants' behaviour and attitude. In contrast with later accounts provided by Lord Kames, Ferguson's analysis concentrated on the way in which the climate conditioned society.[132] Here, the harsh climate and food shortages gave the society a certain hardness and enduring character. Ferguson's stoic evaluation of Lapland nicely illustrates the use of the terrain in order to further his account of social relations. Taken in the wider context of his understanding of European society's progress, the place of physical geography here allowed Ferguson to highlight particular characteristics of the northern

[131] *Ibid*., 111.
[132] Henry Home, Lord Kames, *Sketches of the History of Man, Book One*, ed. James A. Harris (Indiana: Liberty Fund, 2007), 60-64.

region. The central stimulus for Ferguson's argument was Montesquieu's account of the continent in *L'esprit de lois*. Within Book Twenty-One, Montesquieu had provided an account of the continent in which the industriousness and political liberty of the north was contrasted with the laziness and political servitude of the south.[133] For him, the root of northern diligence lay in their lack of the necessities for survival: "the second [the northern nations] have many needs and few of the comforts of life."[134] Responding to this, Ferguson would outline an account of Europe which would pick up on many of the traits identified by Montesquieu. In doing so, Ferguson would use physical geography to highlight particular differences in the historical progress of the two regions.

Ferguson's description of northern Europe began by focusing on the economic character of the region. Echoing Montesquieu's sentiment, stress was put on the role of science and innovation in the progress of commerce: "The fruits of industry have abounded most in the North, and the study of science has here received its most solid improvements."[135] Here, the emphasis was on the significance of the work of individuals such as Nicholas Copernicus and Johannes Kepler in advancing scientific knowledge. By contrast, the societies around the Mediterranean had produced achievements in the arts and literature as well as science.[136] For Ferguson, these variations stemmed from the differences in the cultural customs of the two regions. Whereas in the southern half of Europe the emphasis was on emotion and desire, in the north, the role of rational understanding and factual accuracy was valued for its insight. Here, his commentary on the writings of the north reveals the way this stress on historical evidence was central to his depiction of northern Europe: "A faithful detail of public transactions, with little discernment of their comparative importance, the treaties and the claims of nations, the births and genealogies of princes, are, in the literature of Northern nations, amply preserved."[137] Expressing it in these terms, Ferguson pointed to the way that cultural attitudes in the region put the onus on recording administrative and diplomatic affairs. Seen from this angle, the place of physical geography allowed him to distinguish the type of understanding that predominated in northern Europe from that of southern.

[133] Montesquieu, *L'esprit de lois*, 355.
[134] *Ibid.*, 355.
[135] Ferguson, *Essay*, 112.
[136] *Ibid.*, 112.
[137] *Ibid.*, 112.

One aspect of Ferguson's examination of Europe was the role of the climate. Here, his concern with sociability and his emphasis on cordial relations between individuals served to reinforce the cultural differences that existed. In contrast to the north, where relations between the sexes were "frozen into a state of insensibility", in the southern part of Europe, the climate transformed the individual "into a temporary passion which ingrosses the mind, without enfeebling it, and which excites to romantic achievements."[138] Here, the actions of individuals were governed by sexual desire and uncontrollable lust. In this way, Ferguson's understanding of historical progress in Europe was enhanced by his use of climate and physical geography to analyse differences in social conduct. This emphasis on climate was also crucial in Ferguson's depiction of India.

Alongside his discussion of societal development in Europe, Ferguson's attention was also drawn to the question of historical progress on the Indian subcontinent. Drawing on Montesquieu's argument, Ferguson depicted the extreme temperatures in India as hindering European settlers to fully function: "The Hollander is laborious and industrious in Europe; he becomes more languid and slothful in India."[139] Through using terms such as 'slothful', Ferguson described the effects of the climate as weakening an individual's resolve. In doing so, he identified this process as having a negative effect on societal development in the region. However, although subjected to the extreme heat, Ferguson also demonstrated how India's history was characterised by episodes of considerable social and economic advancement. Thus, unlike central Asia, the subcontinent had the potential for progress: "it is in India, and in the regions of this hemisphere…. the arts of manufacture, and the practice of commerce, are of the greatest antiquity, and have survived."[140] Understood in the context of wider contemporary debates, Ferguson's account within the *Essay* echoed many of the sentiments outlined by Montesquieu. In Chapter Fourteen of *L'esprit de lois*, he had depicted the inhabitants of the region as child-like and requiring direct rule, however whereas Montesquieu had offered a remedy for this through colonial intervention, Ferguson was more reluctant.[141] Such hesitancy may partly be attributed to an anxiety over the conduct of the East India Company. Viewed in these terms, Ferguson's account of India was driven by an ambiguous attitude to the subcontinent. Here, the place of physical geography provides a way of seeing Ferguson's explanation of the society's progress as both an example of stadial theory and a commentary

[138] *Ibid*., 113.
[139] *Ibid*., 115.
[140] *Ibid*., 108.
[141] Montesquieu, *L'esprit de lois*, 255.

on contemporary attitudes towards the region. Such a view was in part conditioned by the complex institutional and intellectual relationship governing British understandings of the subcontinent. In 1772 Ferguson was approached to become a member of the board of commissioners of the East India Company.[142] Whilst failing to come to fruition, this opportunity may have provided him with an insight into the complex attitude of the British authorities towards the subcontinent.[143] As certain commentators have noted, contemporary understandings of India had characterised and idealised the region for its 'Edenic' qualities.[144] In this way, the *Essay*'s account of the Indian Subcontinent represented a significant shift in how landscape was understood by stadial theorists. Thus the region's development was set apart from the rest of Asia through identifying certain key traits that had historically made cultural progress possible. Doing so, Ferguson drew on the sentimental interpretation of the region rooted in a romantic view of India's past in which the comparative advances made were set against the climatic conditions. Here, he used physical geography to highlight its distinctive form of historical progress. In this way, the landscape became as much a rhetorical device as a factor in societal development. To better understand this, focus must be turned to the rest of the continent. Here his account of China proved crucial.

Within the *Essay*, Ferguson's discussion of the Chinese Empire owed a lot to the work of Montesquieu. As was demonstrated in the first chapter, Montesquieu's explanation of China was based on a critical reading of first-hand accounts of the society: "Our missionaries speak of the vast empire of China as of an admirable government."[145] Montesquieu's discussion of the society drew on these contemporary depictions in order to illustrate the peculiarities of Chinese society. One issue which he touched on was that of physical size and how this affected their administration and social customs. Through discussing China in this way, Montesquieu's account presented a warning to Europe about the rise of political despotism. Continuing this theme within the *Essay*, Ferguson's explanation of the character of Chinese society stressed its despotic tendencies. For him, the drive for economic prosperity had weakened the bonds that held Chinese society together, to the point of damaging its natural cohesion. At the heart of this

[142] David Hume to Adam Smith, October 1772, *The Correspondence of Adam Smith*, ed. Ernest Campbell Mossner and Ian Simpson Ross (Indianapolis: Liberty Fund, 1987), 165. Cited in Richard Bourke, *Empire & Revolution: The Political Life of Edmund Burke* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2015), 359.
[143] Robert Travers, *Ideology and Empire in Eighteenth-Century India: The British in Bengal* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2007), 6.
[144] Richard Grove, *Green Imperialism: Colonial Expansion: Tropical Island Edens and the Origins of Environmentalism, 1600–1860* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2003), 21-2.

[145] Montesquieu, *L'esprit de lois*, 126-7.

depiction of China was a concern with sociability and the way individuals seemed to be limited in expressing their natural inclinations.

> When we suppose government to have bestowed a degree of tranquillity which we sometimes hope to reap from it, as the best of its fruits, and public affairs to proceed, in the several departments of legislation and execution, with the least possible interruption to commerce and lucrative arts; such a state, like that of China, by throwing affairs into separate offices, where conduct consists in detail, and in the observance of forms, by superseding all the exertions of a great or a liberal mind, is more akin to despotism than we are apt to imagine.[146]

In contrast to Hume's favourable depiction of China as a law-governed society, Ferguson was alert to how areas of public life diminished as the state began to intervene in civil society.[147] In using the term 'liberal mind', he highlighted the fact that the characteristics of human nature required that the individual have freedom to pursue their own goals. Seen in the context of his discussion of Europe, his point was that the historical progress of the Chinese Empire necessarily differed due to this fundamental difference. Here, there is a direct link with Ferguson's argument from the *Institutes* in relation to human behaviour and societal conduct, where he noted: "Men by their confederacy, as well as by their artifice, are enabled to subdue every other species of animal to subsist by their spoil, and to employ the strength of other animals, though superior to their own."[148] By the term 'confederacy', Ferguson envisaged human cooperation as structuring relations between individuals in a society. Through doing so, Ferguson identified the Chinese governing structures as stifling the ability of individuals to foster a sense of belonging. Ferguson's depiction of China therefore looked to its insular characteristics as a way of explaining historical progress:

> The map of the world, in China, was a square plate, the greater part of which was occupied by the provinces of this great empire, leaving on its skirts a few obscure corners, into which the wretched remainder of mankind were supposed to be driven.[149]

In this context, the role of physical geography was to underline this hostile attitude China had towards the rest of the world. In parallel with Montesquieu, Ferguson's description of China

[146] Ferguson, *Essay*, 254-5.
[147] David Hume, *Political Essays*, ed. Knud Haakonssen, (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1994), 66-7. See also McDaniel, *Adam Ferguson*, 104.
[148] Ferguson, *Institutes*, 22-3.
[149] Ferguson, *Essay*, 194.

serves as a warning about the corrosion of civil society in Europe. Seen in relation to the issue of the state system in eighteenth-century Europe, Ferguson's account of societal development drew on the ideas of civic republicanism and the citizen soldier. Here, the work of Machiavelli, reflected in Ferguson's own concerns over commercial activity, link up with discussions of physical geography within the *Essay*.[150] His arguments were directly related to contemporary issues about the physical size of states in Europe. Furthermore, physical geography also played a key role in allowing Ferguson to demonstrate the significance of patriotism for the development of civil society in Europe. As he noted: "…. the peasants on different sides of the Alps, and the Pyrenees, the Rhine, or the British channel, give vent to their prejudices and national passions."[151] Here, the physical landscape gave Ferguson a way of explaining the roots of patriotism which drew on the ideas of Machiavelli and civic virtue. Echoing Machiavelli's point about national security, Ferguson's use of physical geography reveals the extent to which he connected the concern for the terrain with that of political identity: "The society and concourse of other men are not more necessary to form the individual, than the rivalship and competition of nations are to invigorate the principles of political life in a state."[152] In the above quote, this sense of antagonism was linked to the way the physical landscape separated populations into different groups. Doing so, it provides a way for Ferguson to demonstrate how the idea of civic patriotism related to the individual's identification with a perceived common good. Aside from the Machiavellian reading, Ferguson's concern with the physical geography of Europe can be understood in terms of ideas of human nature and social conduct. Concern with civic virtue is replaced with an emphasis on the cordial relations and natural sociability of mankind. Within his account of stadial theory, the place of physical geography highlighted that the human relations that bound a community together encouraged a particular type of historical progress. In this context, the concern for physical geography was linked to collective behaviour and the idea of social relations. Unlike the civic-republican view, this sense of comradeship and personal loyalty was rooted in the sociable nature of humans themselves.

Within the *Essay*, Ferguson demonstrated how different types of physical terrain encouraged variations in civic identity. In doing so, he drew attention to the significance of the location for these differences: "That extensive tract of the earth, containing so great a variety

[150] *Ibid.*, xiii.
[151] *Ibid.*, 27.
[152] *Ibid.*, 116.

of situation, climate, and soil, should, in the manners of its inhabitants, exhibit all the diversities which arise from the unequal influence of the sun, joined to a different nourishment and manner of life."[153] Through making clear that one of the factors stimulating how societal development across the globe varied was the relationship between physical geography and social conduct, Ferguson represented a voice within the Scottish Enlightenment that looked to the issues of human nature and social interaction as a cause of historical progress. Doing so, he drew both from the work of Machiavelli and Francis Hutcheson in order to determine the precise relationship between the terrain and stadial theory. Through blending these two intellectual traditions, Ferguson was able to distinguish and contrast the different types of societal progress in Europe and Asia.

This chapter has argued that physical geography had a significant role in Adam Ferguson's account of stadial theory. Furthermore, it has been shown how he drew on and extended Montesquieu's explanation for the contrasting fortunes of societies on the European and Asian continents by making use of both the civic-republican and natural law traditions. Whereas the conventional historiography has tended to focus exclusively on one tradition, this chapter has demonstrated that through combining these two approaches, Ferguson's discussion of physical geography revealed its connection to his overarching concern with sociability. Through examining his discussions of Tartary, Europe, India and China, this chapter has illustrated the way Ferguson stressed the role of social relations in determining the nature of historical progress around the globe. It would be left to other Scottish Enlightenment authors examined in this thesis to engage with the moral conclusions of these arguments.

[153] Ferguson, *Essay*, 80-1.

## Conclusion

The style of argument presented in *An Essay on the History of Civil Society* followed the lead of Montesquieu in describing the development and character of societal progress. For Ferguson, Books Fourteen through Eighteen of *L'esprit de lois* were an essential tool for understanding the way physical geography influenced historical progress. Whilst conventional explanations of his work have stressed the legacy of Machiavelli and civic-republicanism, an alternative approach emphasised the role of Francis Hutcheson and the ideas of natural sociability. The aim of this chapter was to examine how the place of physical geography gave an insight into Ferguson's contribution to stadial theory. Through this, an argument was made that social conduct and civic virtue were central to his argument within the *Essay*.

Central to Ferguson's account of stadial theory was a view of societal development which took seriously differences in the process of social formation around the globe. One underlying concern of the *Essay* was to draw attention to the rise of political despotism. In this chapter, Ferguson's engagement with Montesquieu was shown to have focused on how the terrain fostered certain cultural attitudes. Here, the emphasis was on Ferguson's discussion of the variations in historical progress in the societies of Europe and Asia. Whilst agreeing with Montesquieu that there was a fundamental difference, in the *Essay* Ferguson enhanced this contrast. He drew on the ideas of Machiavelli and civic-republicanism, stressing the importance of the relationship between terrain and civic virtue whilst highlighting the way issues of political leadership and social stability were connected to the environmental conditions which were imposed on a society.

Building on the work of Montesquieu, Ferguson examined the historical progress of Tartar society. Through highlighting his discussion of the inhospitable climate, this chapter explored how Ferguson's concern with the instability of Tartary was intimately linked to questions of physical geography. Framed in this way, Ferguson's account of central Asia exemplifies many of the themes that the historiography has emphasised. One example of this was how the poor quality of agricultural land led to the Tartars adopting a nomadic lifestyle. Ferguson's concern with the martial values of Tartary was deeply connected to the way he understood that the physical terrain influenced the society's structure. Attention was then turned to Ferguson's conception of martial values within his 1745 regimental sermon. In doing so, it highlights the way Ferguson's reading of the Tartars' social structure was conditioned by

his emphasis on the obligations one individual had to another and how his concern with the landscape was tied to questions of sociability. Here, emphasis was drawn to the influence of Francis Hutcheson on Ferguson's view of societal conduct.

Ferguson's debt to Hutcheson was considerable. Through examining the arguments in the *Institutes* and the *Principles*, it was demonstrated that Ferguson's understanding of the relationship between physical geography and societal progress was conditioned by his emphasis on social interaction. Within the *Essay*, Ferguson's commitment to sociability was fundamental to his account of the contrasts in social structure between the northern and southern regions of Europe. Through examining his understanding of the differences in cultural custom between the two regions, this chapter drew attention to the way physical geography played a central part in his explanation for the historical progress of Europe. One aspect of the discussion was Ferguson's emphasis on the role of the climate in shaping the particular values of the Mediterranean.

Within the *Essay,* discussions of the climate followed the pattern set out by Montesquieu. In *L'esprit de lois*, Montesquieu focused on the way differences in temperature caused fundamental changes in the character of the individual. When seen alongside physical geography, Ferguson's treatment of the issue represented an additional factor with which to assess variations in historical progress. This chapter highlighted two examples in which Ferguson's understanding of the climate was crucial to his account of stadial theory: first, in his discussion of Lapland and the way in which the harsh conditions led to modifications in the behaviour and attitudes of the inhabitants and secondly, his detailed examination of societal progress on the Indian subcontinent. In both instances the climate was shown to have a profound effect on the ability of the respective societies to adapt their behaviour. In the case of India, Ferguson's account was read against the backdrop of both Montesquieu's account and the complicated relationship the region had with Britain. It was demonstrated that Ferguson's understanding of the climate drove his characterisation of the inhabitants and how physical geography allowed him to stress the distinctiveness of the Indian subcontinent from the rest of Asia. Unlike India, Ferguson's discussion of China made no reference to the issue of climate. Instead, the concern was with the way physical geography allowed Ferguson to analyse the workings of Chinese society and to emphasise its despotic tendencies. Seen in the context of Montesquieu, his discussion reinforced the fundamental differences between the historical development of the Chinese Empire and Europe. At the root of this concern was an emphasis on physical geography and its intimate ties to questions of sociability. Seen in the context of

Ferguson's concern with social conduct, his discussion provides valuable insight into how he understood the relationship between the physical size of states and the liberty of the individual.

Within the *Essay*, Adam Ferguson's account of historical progress demonstrates the influence physical geography had on variations in societal development. Through using different case studies he was able to explain how the landscape could foster either political despotism or a sense of patriotism. Drawing on the legacy of civic republicanism and ideas of natural sociability, this chapter has demonstrated how the relationship between physical geography and social structure defined Ferguson's contribution to stadial theory.

## Physical Geography and Societal Progress in Lord Kames'

## *Sketches of the History of Man*

### Introduction

Seen in the context of Montesquieu's *L'esprit de lois*, Lord Kames' *Sketches of the History of Man* shared many features with Adam Ferguson's *An Essay on the History of Civil Society*.[154] Drawing on *L'esprit de lois*, both Ferguson and Kames provided accounts of stadial theory that looked to environmental factors to explain different kinds of societal progress. For Kames, issues of historical progress were intimately connected with particular theological concerns surrounding the question of race. Unlike the other authors examined in this thesis, Kames' commitment to a providential line of reasoning gave rise to a complex view of stadial theory in which societal development was only feasible under certain conditions. Published in two volumes in 1774, *Sketches of the History of Man* was partly the product of both Kames' engagement with contemporary literary circles of Edinburgh and his professional life in the Scottish legal establishment.[155] Whilst reviewers commended the work for an abundance of empirical information, *Sketches* was also heavily criticised for lacking a sustained theoretical argument.[156] However, as this chapter will demonstrate, Kames' account of stadial theory did have an underlying explanation for historical progress which linked the origins of humanity to a precise account of societal development. Here, physical geography provided the means to explain variations in social structure whilst conveying a sceptical understanding of historical progress.

Lord Kames' contribution to the Scottish Enlightenment has often been seen as piecemeal and varied. This has been partially drawn from his polymath character and tendency to intervene in a wide variety of debates without having any substantial influence. As a result, the recent historiographic literature that has emerged has tended to characterise him as an

[154] Adam Ferguson, *An Essay on the History of Civil Society*, ed. Fania Oz-Salzberger (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press), 1995.
[155] Henry Home, 'Lord Kames', *Sketches of the History of Man, Volumes I and I1*, ed. James A. Harris (Indiana: Liberty Fund, 2007).
[156] James Boswell to Bennet Langton, *The Correspondence of James Boswell with Certain Members of the Club*, ed. Charles N. Fifer (London: Heinemann, 1976: Yale Edition of *The Private Papers of James Boswell, vol. 3*), 43. Cited in Kames, *Sketches, Book 1*, x-xi.

unoriginal thinker whose intellectual contribution was relatively inconsequential compared with that of Adam Smith.[157] Yet both the arguments contained in *Sketches of the History of Man* and his *Principles of Morality and Natural Religion* demonstrate that within his wide-ranging interests, Kames pursued a fairly consistent understanding of morality which attempted to fuse together different strands of eighteenth-century discourse, one of which consistent themes was his theological position.

Seen in the context of the other authors examined in this thesis, Kames' concern with theological questions influences his unique contribution to stadial theory. Furthermore, rather than just accepting the conventional view of him as a polymath, this chapter attempts to revise our understandings of Kames' argument by tracing his efforts to connect questions of historical development to a theological commitment to polygenism. Within *Sketches*, the place of physical geography gave him a way of understanding historical progress which explained variations in social formation that drew on the idea of the separation of races. For Colin Kidd, the arguments pursued in *Sketches* reflected Kames' tendency to follow the empirical evidence to its logical conclusion.[158] However, through understanding *Sketches* in terms of an anthropological survey, what Kidd neglects is the way Kames consistently emphasised theological and moral concerns in his account of historical progress.[159] In this way, Kames' use of Montesquieu's argument in *L'esprit de lois* was motivated by this distinct concern with the relationship between Providence and historical progress. Here, physical geography not only gave Kames the ability to explore differences in social structure but ultimately provide theological justification for their existence.

Within *Sketches*, one noticeable feature of Kames' understanding of historical progress was the way he dealt with arguments over climatic determinism. Whilst not completely rejecting it, Kames' view of the climate was characterised by scepticism and critical appraisal. As this chapter demonstrates, one of the central examples of this was his analysis of the origins of the American continent. Here, physical geography was drawn upon in *Sketches* to illustrate his criticisms of environmental determinism. Stimulated by the work of Buffon, within 'Sketch Twelve' Kames critically assessed his argument and presented an account of the origins of the American continent which took its location and the unique racial characteristics of its

[157] Stephen Bogle, 'A review of A. Rahmation, *Lord Kames: Legal and Social Theorist*, (2015)', *Journal of Legal History*, 37 no. 3, (2016), 331-334, 331.
[158] Colin Kidd, *The Forging of Races: Race and Scripture in the Protestant Atlantic World, 1600-2000* (Cambridge University Press, 2006), 95.
[159] *Ibid.*, 95.

inhabitants as evidence against climatic determinism. In this context, it will be argued that Kames drew directly on his own theological position and in particular his ideas surrounding polygenism in order to bolster his claim for a Providential explanation. Through highlighting this feature of his argument, it will be argued that physical geography was an integral part of his argument against Buffon and environmental determinism. In doing so it will be shown that they form a central tenet in his account of stadial theory. Alongside Buffon, Kames also engaged with the argument of climatic determinism provided by Paul Henri Mallet. Drawing on the work of Tacitus, Mallet presented an account of the history of northern Europe which explained the emergence of political liberty in the region with reference to the climatic conditions.[160] The importance of Tacitus to debates over climate have recently shown him to be an essential reference point for anyone trying to explain the characteristics of northern European society.[161] Yet as will be demonstrated, Kames also used Tacitus in order to criticise Mallet's climatic arguments. One consequence of this is to reveal that Kames' own understanding of race, and even human biology, was heavily connected with his views on divine intervention and the origins of humanity. A second, and more immediate consequence, is that it brings Kames' ideas concerning the role of morality in the progress of a society into sharper focus. Here, attention will be turned to his understanding of the historical development of law.

Aside from *Sketches*, this chapter considers the argument for historical progress contained within Kames' *Historical Law Tracts*. In this context the emphasis will focus on Kames' ideas concerning property and his understanding of the emergence of property rights in relation to stadial theory. One of the principle aims of the *Tracts* was to function as a way of reforming the Scottish legal system and to develop a concept of morality which acquiesced to the principles of law.[162] One area of Kames' concern was the way in which property rights related to the question of cognitive ability. Here, a link can be made with Kames' own polygenist account of racial difference and the way he seemed to reject the idea of a savage stage on the basis of the Biblical notion that Adam possessed knowledge of the natural world that he passed on to his descendents.[163] Whilst not at first obvious, the place of physical

[160] Christopher B. Krebs, *A Most Dangerous Book: Tacitus's Germania from the Roman Empire to the Third Reich* (New York: Norton, 2012), 172.
[161] *Ibid.*, 180.
[162] Bogle, *Rahmation*, 332.
[163] Kidd, *Forging of* Races, 95.

geography in this is key to identifying those societies which were able to progress. This section functions as a forerunner to his account of commercial society.

In place of the conventional tendency to disregard Kames' discussion of urban society in *Sketch Eleven*, this chapter will demonstrate the significant way in which he understood physical geography.[164] Against the conventional view that it was inconsistent with the rest of his argument, this chapter will demonstrate how the 'Sketch' connected with his wider moral concerns around the relationship between luxury and commerce. A significant part of Kames' argument relied on an idea of moral geography.[165] Drawing on this concept, it will explore the construction of his explanation for commercial society which imbued the landscape with ethical values. Building on from his argument in *Tracts* that there was a fundamental difference between the two ideas, it will be shown that his suggestion for the remodelling of urban Britain utilised the idea of physical geography as a way of combatting the threat posed by luxury. Understood in these terms, the argument in 'Sketch Eleven', connects with the wider theological underpinnings of *Sketches* and the resulting emphasis on ethical behaviour. In the final section, three examples are used to describe Kames' overarching understanding of physical geography. Together they highlight his wrestle with the moral and political implications of the terrain in his account of stadial theory. By grouping discussions of Greenland, Lapland and Tartary together, it denotes the way his theological concern links to a political one. Furthermore, whilst the example of Tartary may indicate the inadequacy of Kames as a political theorist, it also reveals his use of physical geography to show how the terrain stifles societal development. Thus the lack of theological concern in this context must not detract from the view that Kames advanced the same degree of moral scepticism in his account of central Asia as he did throughout *Sketches* by substituting a theological explanation focused on the political process. This chapter therefore reveals the way Kames' understanding

[164] David Lieberman, 'The legal needs of a commercial society: the jurisprudence of Lord Kames' in *Wealth & Virtue: The Shaping of Political Economy in the Scottish Enlightenment,* ed. Istvan Hont and Michael Ignatieff (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1983), 203-234.

[165] The term 'moral geography' was first coined by Thomas Rawson Birks in his *First Principles of Moral Science a course of lectures delivered in the University of Cambridge* (London: Macmillan & Co, 1873). For a recent discussion of his work see David Beckingham, 'Gender, Space and Drunkenness: Liverpool's licensed premises, 1860-1914', *Annals of the Association of American Geographers,* 102, no.3 (2012) 647-666. In this present context however, the concept of 'Moral Geography' is applied to the way Kames inserted key moral and theological arguments in relation to the terrain regarding human conduct. In particular it helps elucidate his understanding of the relationship between commercial activity and human conduct in the urban environment in 'Sketch Eleven'.

of physical geography was motivated by an account of human nature and commercial society that stressed the moral fragility of historical progress.

## Kames' Physical Geography

In line with Adam Ferguson and the other Scottish Enlightenment authors examined in this thesis, Kames' understanding of physical geography drew directly from the arguments contained in *L'esprit de lois*. As has been outlined in the first chapter, part of Montesquieu's view of historical progress sought to demonstrate the way particular traits of a society could be explained with reference to both the climate and physical geography. As noted in *Book Eighteen*: "The fertile countries have plains where one can dispute nothing with the stronger man: therefore, one submits to him; and, when one has submitted to him, the spirit of liberty cannot return; the goods of the countryside are a guarantee of faithfulness."[166] Drawing attention to how the physical terrain influenced the political progress of a society, Montesquieu explored the way in which different environments caused individuals to behave in a certain manner. Though physical geography and climate were central to his account of historical progress, it was the way in which they interacted with other factors such as cultural custom which made Montesquieu's argument in *Part Three,* so significant.[167] Whilst he agreed with Montesquieu over the place of physical geography and climate, for Kames the moral inequality between different societies and how this affected their cultural progress was the more significant factor. In order to appreciate the way Kames understood physical geography in relation to societal progress, attention must be drawn to his understanding of the threat of war on a society. Within 'Sketch Six', Kames' attention turned to the issue of warfare. Towards the end of the 'Sketch' his focus was England and in particular its physical geography: "Our situation as an island, among several advantages, is so far unlucky, that it puts us off our guard, and renders us negligent in providing for defence: we never were invaded without being subdued."[168] Rather than seeing islands as physical situations where liberty was protected, as had been depicted in *L'esprit de lois*, Kames argued that Montesquieu had overlooked the role of Parliament.[169] Yet on other occasions in *Sketches*, Kames used the terrain in terms of identifying the underlying social mores that characterised a nation.[170] Drawing on the ideas of

[166] Charles-Louis de Secondat, Baron de Montesquieu, *L'esprit de lois*, ed. Anne M. Cohler, Miller, Carolyn Basia Miller & Harold Samuel Stone (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1989), 286.
[167] Silvia Sebastiani, *The Scottish Enlightenment: Race, Gender and the Limits of Progress* (New York: Palgrave, 2013), 25.
[168] Kames, *Sketches*, 411.
[169] *Ibid.*, 411.
[170] *Ibid.*, 411.

Cicero, his focus was on the role of physical geography in relation to patriotism.[171] Within 'Sketch Five', Kames maintained that feelings of fellowship and social affection were better encouraged by limiting the physical size of states: "Small states, however corrupted, are not liable to despotism: the people being close to the seat of government, and accustomed to see their governors daily, talk familiarly of their errors, and publish them everywhere."[172] In this way, Kames' reading of Montesquieu focused on the way in which a particular location could generate public feeling and social cohesion, with an ability to remain accountable linked to the physical proximity of political institutions to the citizenry.

This concern with how physical geography encouraged sentiments of national unity and social cooperation contrasted sharply with Kames' view of the climate. In his 'Preliminary Discourse', he carefully evaluated the role of the climate in the context of societal progress. Whilst he would draw on the idea in his discussion of Amerindian culture, his pragmatic use of the issue was driven by the way he used physical geography to highlight certain features of historical progress within *Sketches*. Alongside his analysis of Montesquieu's account of climate, Kames also discussed the work of Paul Henri Mallet. Born in Geneva, Mallet had been appointed in 1753 by Fredrick V to compose an 'enlightened' account of the history of Denmark.[173] In the resulting text, Mallet drew on the work of Tacitus to depict the character of the Scandinavians as being linked to the effects of the climate.[174] Whilst broadly consistent with Montesquieu's view, Mallet emphasised both the 'Nordic' features of Danish society and the role played by religion.[175] Within the text, he stated: "A great abundance of blood, fibres strong and rigid, vigour inexhaustible, formed the temperament of the Germans, the Scandinavians, and of all other people who live under the same climate. Robust by the climate, and hardened with exercise; confidence in bodily strength formed their character."[176] For Kames, this account misrepresented the biological effects of the climate on the human body. In particular, he questioned whether courage could simply be explained by the levels of

[171] Iain McDaniel, 'Unsocial Sociability in the Scottish Enlightenment: Ferguson and Kames on War, Sociability and the Foundations of Patriotism', *History of European Ideas*, 41, no. 5, 2015 , 677.
[172] Kames, *Sketches*, 396.
[173] Krebs, *A Most Dangerous Book,* 171.
[174] *Ibid.*, 173.
[175] *Ibid.*, 172-3.
[176] Paul Henri Mallet, *Northern Antiquities: Or, A Description of the Manners, Customs, Religion and Laws of the Ancient Danes, and Other Northern Nations: Including Those of Our Own Saxon Ancestors: with a Translation of the Edda, Or System of Runic Mythology, and Other Pieces, from the Ancient Islandic Tongue*, ed. Thomas Percy (London: T. Carnan and co., 1770). Cited in Kames, *Sketches*, 37.

blood.[177] Citing Tacitus' own observation that an excess of blood would inhibit the ability of the individual to exhibit the behaviour described by Mallet, Kames stated:

> At that rate, the loss of an ounce of blood may turn the balance. Courage makes an essential ingredient in magnanimity and heroism: are such elevated virtues corporeal merely? Is the mind admitted for no share? This indeed would be a mortifying circumstance in the human race. But even supposing courage to be corporeal merely, it is however far from being proportioned to the quantity of blood: a greater quantity than can be circulated freely and easily by the fore of the heart and arteries, becomes a disease, termed a *plethora*.[178]

Tacitus' evidence supplied Kames with the means to reject Mallet's argument. Yet, in doing so, Kames did not totally reject environmental explanations for political structure. Part of the wider aim of *Sketches* related the issue of man's sociable nature to a moral explanation for an individual's identity. Here, physical geography provided a way of demonstrating the importance of social cohesion. In the preface to the second volume of *Sketches*, he stated "…patriotism is the corner-stone of civil society; that no nation ever became great and powerful without it."[179] Presented in these terms, *Sketches* aimed to examine the way society influenced an individual's identity and how this led to variations in societal development. Kames' recognition of the significance of social belonging was driven in part by a particular theological stance on the issue of race. Here, the Providential underpinning of his argument reflected an important point about his overall contribution to stadial theory. Taking this controversial stance, Kames provided an explanation for the history of humanity which used physical geography to make a fundamental point about societal progress.[180] According to the conventional monogenist account central to Enlightenment debate, all of humanity could trace its origins back to the Garden of Eden. Yet as Colin Kidd describes, Kames' account tried to explain why the physical appearance of individuals was so marked in different parts of the globe.[181] In *Sketches*, the disparities in social progress around the globe highlighted by physical geography were taken to be the result of divine intervention. Within the first 'Sketch', Kames had drawn attention to the way that certain plants seemed only to grow in particular areas of the globe: "Plants were created of different kinds to fit them for different climates."[182] Through emphasising the idea that they had been 'designed' in a certain way in order to withstand certain

[177] Kames, *Sketches,*38.
[178] Kames' own footnote. Kames, *Sketches,* 38.
[179] Kames, Preface to *Sketches, Volume II.*
[180] For a general account of Kames' controversial stance on the question of race in Christianity, see Kidd, *Forging of Races,* 79-112.
[181] Kidd, *Forging of Races,* 95.
[182] Kames, *Sketches,* 21.

conditions, his discussion was rooted in a deep concern with the issue of Providence and how all life seemed to have been preconditioned to exist in a particular way. Rooted in his own theological standpoint, the vision of the world outlined in *Sketches* encompassed both its natural history and the development of society. Recognising this enables a greater understanding of his criticism of Buffon's environmental arguments.

In his *Histoire Naturelle,* Buffon outlined an account of human origins that stressed the separation of race: "Man, white in Europe, black in Africa, yellow in Asia, and copper coloured in America, is still the fame being tinctured with the colour peculiar to the climate."[183] Stimulated by contemporary debates around human reproduction, *Histoire Naturelle* explained the process by focusing on every new generation as the result of the reorganisation of organic matter.[184] This 'Generation Theory' gave the climate a powerful role in determining human difference: "The influence of climate is marked with but slight variations in the human species; because that is entire in itself, and totally distinct from every other." [185] It was environmental conditioning and not theological argument that explained racial variations among humans. Here, physical geography played a significant role in establishing both the unity of the human race whilst at the same time accepting and promoting the idea of fundamental differences within humanity.

In responding to Buffon, Kames focused his attention on the American continent. Debates about the region were intimately tied to theological concerns and the way that the existence of Amerindian society seemed to contradict Biblical reasoning. Within 'Sketch Twelve', Kames stated: "….supposing the human race to have been planted in America by the hand of God later than the days of Moses, Adam and Eve might have been the first parents of mankind, i.e. of all who at that time existed, without being the first parents of the Americans."[186] Through referring to the origin of the Amerindians to be other than Adam and Eve, *Sketches* revealed the true extent of its commitments. Rather than explaining racial difference through climatic determinism and the unity of the human race, Kames dated the

[183] George Louis Leclerc, Comte de Buffon, *Histoire naturelle, générale et particulière* (Paris: Imprimerie Royale, 1744-1804). Cited in Home, *Sketches,* 24.
[184] Shirley Roe, 'Biology, Atheism, Politics in Eighteenth-Century France', in *Biology and Ideology from Descartes to Dawkins*, ed. Denis Alexander and Ronald Numbers (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2010), 45.
[185] George Louis Leclerc, Comte de. Buffon, *Buffon's Natural History containing a Theory of the Earth, A General History of Man of The Brute Creation & of Vegetables, Minerals etc. etc. From the French with Notes by the Translator in Ten Volumes, Vol V,* ed. T. Gillet (London: Wild-Court, 1807), 325.
[186] Kames, *Sketches,* 559-560.

origins of the American continent to have occurred after the rest of the world.[187] Here, he drew attention to the failure of Buffon's arguments to account for the degree of racial uniformity which existed on the American continent.[188] This intertwining of racial and theological concerns gave Kames' understanding of physical geography an exceptional place within his overall account of stadial theory.

For Kames, the continent of America, with its unique natural produce and a social structure had been created by God. The region was seen by Kames to be markedly different from the rest of the world. "America and the Terra Australis must have been planted by the Almighty with a number of animals and vegetables, some of them peculiar to those vast continents."[189] As with his comments in the first 'Sketch', his point was that the physical structure of the globe resulted in comparative differences in the flora and livestock between regions. Thus divine intervention was a crucial aspect of Kames' understanding of physical geography. One of the central planks of this providential explanation for America's existence lay in the apparent lack of any land connecting the region to any other part of the world. In relation to his polygenist ideas, this could be seen to be of fundamental importance. The absence of a land bridge meant that the issue of migration to America was left unresolved: "As there has not been discovered any passage by land to America from the old world, no problem has more embarrassed the learned, than to account for the origin of American nations: there are as many different opinions as there are writers."[190] Teasing out these inconsistencies in Buffon's environmental argument, Kames connected his views of historical progress to his polygenism, stimulating an alternative natural history of humanity to the one outlined in *Histoire Naturelle*. This allowed Kames to highlight the importance of race in relation to progress, demonstrating the key role of physical geography in explaining the variation in global historical progress.

Kames' emphasis on divine intervention and the ensuing theological argument did not just influence his ideas on race, but also informed his understanding of the emergence of commercial society.[191] Whilst his 1761 *Historical Law Tracts* was primarily aimed at

[187] Kames, *Sketches*, 567.
[188] I*bid*., 557.
[189] *Ibid*., 560.
[190] *Ibid*., 555.
[191] David Lieberman, 'The legal needs of a commercial society: the jurisprudence of Lord Kames', in *Wealth and Virtue: The Shaping of Political Economy in the Scottish Enlightenment*, ed. Istvan Hont and Michael Ignatieff (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1983), 234.

reforming the Scottish legal system in relation to the improvement of commercial law, *Tracts* also highlighted Kames' concern with the idea of private property. Indeed, his acceptance of stadial theory and with it the existence of the savage state contradicted the view that Adam possessed knowledge of the natural world that he passed on to his descendent.[192] In the *Tracts*, Kames explained a history of law that rejected the universal process of historical development. In the process, Kames connected the absence of property ownership in the savage state with the lack of a sense of private property.

> It appears to me extremely probable, that among savages involved in objects of sense, and strangers to abstract speculation, property and the rights of moral powers arising from it, never are with accuracy distinguished from natural powers, which must be exerted upon the subject to make it profitable to the possessor.[193]

Within the quote, Kames depicted the savage as being unable to comprehend property rights due to their lack of cognitive skills. Furthermore, for him, the capacity to exert control over an object was not the same thing as was the ability to grasp ideas of rights over an object. Moral power, as he put it, concerned not just the natural force an individual had over an object but the capability to conceive of rights they had over it.[194] Thus the history of commercial law was an examination of the changes to property rights as a society progressed. Yet when seen in the context of Kames' polygenism, *Tracts* reinforced the view that only certain societies could progress. The rise of commerce was partly the result of the knowledge acquired by the descendants of Adam.[195] Here the moral argument present in *Sketches* merges with the historical legal one in *Tracts*. A key aspect of this concerned the difference between luxury and commerce.

Underpinning Lord Kames' view of commercial society was an anxiety over the moral implication posed by luxury.[196] The precise context of his unease showed his dilemma as to whether or not to accept the inevitable course of historical development and embrace the changing civic values that emerged with the rise of commerce.[197] Whilst hostile to the cultural transformation which took place, in *Tracts*, Kames nevertheless promoted the abolition of

[192] Colin Kidd, *The Forging of Races*, 97.
[193] Henry Home (Lord Kames), *Historical Law-Tracts* (Clark, N.J.: The Lawbook Exchange Ltd,), 82.
[194] *Ibid*., 82.
[195] Kidd, *Forging of Races*, 97.
[196] Kames, *Sketches*, xvi.
[197] Adam Ferguson, *An Essay on the History of Civil Society*, ed. Fania Oz-Satzberger (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1995) xv-xvi.

entails, relaxing the rules around inherited property rights.[198] This ambivalence towards commercial society was further illustrated by Kames' account of the city within *Sketches.* Recounting the emergence of urban environments, in 'Sketch Eleven', he signified the way luxury and hedonistic values presented a deep threat to the moral integrity of a society. Here, physical geography enabled him to identify considerable issues for the state, raised by the layout of London. Kames sought to correct these excesses of commerce in line with his account of stadial theory.

At the beginning of 'Sketch Eleven', he drew attention to a historic tendency to portray the urban environment in a negative light: "In all ages an opinion has been prevalent, that a great city is a great evil."[199] Expanding on this point, he focused on the way major centres of politics and commerce presented particular problems for the state. Seen in the context of eighteenth-century discussions around urban regeneration and material culture, Kames' account of the city given in *Sketches* was at odds with these contemporary understandings.[200] Instead, his depiction shared many similarities with early modern emphasis on public morality and demographic character.[201] Drawing attention to the cities of London and Paris, Kames depicted historic attempts to curb the physical expansion of these urban environments as ineffectual, shifting the emphasis onto the issue of commercial society and its relationship with public morality. For him, London's underlying problems lay in the temperament of its inhabitants rather than the physical dimensions of the city. [202] Here, physical geography allowed him to highlight a significant problem of commercial society. Focusing on the City of Westminster's physical proximity to the City of London, Kames depicted this physical arrangement as demonstrating an awkward alliance between commerce and virtue.

> The two great cities of London and Westminster are extremely ill fitted for local union. The latter, the seat of government and of the noblesse, infects the former with luxury and with love of show. The former, the seat of commerce, infects the latter with love of gain. The mixture of these opposite passions, is productive of every groveling vice. [203]

[198] David Leiberman, *The Province of Legislation Determined: legal theory in eighteenth-century Britain,* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1989), 156-8.
[199] Kames, *Sketches*, 546.
[200] Roy Porter, *English Society in the Eighteenth Century* (London: Penguin, 1990), 39.
[201] Roy Porter, *London: A Social History* (London: Hamish Hamilton 1994), 67-8.
[202] Kames, *Sketches*, 546.
[203] Kames, *Sketches*, 546.

These concerns about the layout and political organisation of London reflected Kames' overall anxiety towards the cultural values embedded within commercial society. Through citing the idea of passions and moral conduct, the argument here ought to be seen as a reinforcement of his distinction between the forces of luxury and commerce. Furthermore, through presenting his analysis as a commentary on the social conditions of London, Kames used physical geography to make a significant criticism of large cities.[204] A significant feature of his argument was the concern with the limited availability of space and the way that this put pressure on resources and the environment: "The air of a populous city is infected by multitudes crouded together; and people there seldom make out the usual time of life."[205] By drawing on the *Bills of Mortality*, Kames was able to mount a critique of London's urban society which see the reorganisation of the city. For David Lieberman, this vision would amount to an abolition of Lsondon and the forced resettlement of the city's deprived inhabitants.[206] Yet it is also the case that the 'Sketch' signified a shift in terms of the relationship between physical geography and the idea of the city.

> There are accordingly in London, a much greater number of idle and profligate wretches, than in Paris, or in any other town, in proportion to the number of inhabitants. These wretches, in Doctor Swift's style, never think of posterity, because posterity never thinks of them: Men who hunt after pleasure, and live from day to day, have no notion of submitting to the burden of a family. These causes produce a greater number of children in Paris than in London; tho' probably they differ not much in populousness.[207]

Through concerning himself with the issue of family size, Kames may be read as foreshadowing later concerns expressed by Thomas Malthus in his *An Essay on the Principle of Population*. However, what was more significant was the way in which Kames' argument corresponded with Adam Smith's explanation of the way environmental factors seemed to influence the economic structure of a society.[208] In this context the emphasis on reducing the

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[204] In the text, Kames uses the data obtained from the *Collection of Yearly Bills of Mortality, from 1657 – 1758 Inclusive* to assess the birth rates in London in which he notes a discrepancy with regard to Anglican baptism. Interestingly, the same anomaly is used by E.A. Wrighley in his 'A Simple Model of London's Importance in Changing English Society and Economy' *Past and Present,* 3, no.1 (1967), 3.
[205] Kames, *Sketches,* 551.
[206] David Lieberman, 'The legal needs of a commercial society: the jurisprudence of Lord Kames', in *Wealth and Virtue: The Shaping of Political Economy in the Scottish Enlightenment,* ed. Istvan Hont and Michael Ignatieff (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1983), 223.
[207] Kames, *Sketches,* 552
[208] Adam Smith, 'First Fragment on the Division of Labour', in *Lectures on Jurisprudence*, (Indianapolis: Liberty Fund, 1982), 583 in *Lectures on Jurisprudence*, (Indianapolis: Liberty Fund, 1982), 583. See also Thomas Malthus, *An Essay on the Principle of Population,* ed. Donald Winch (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1992).

population of London ought to be read alongside other accounts of physical landscape in *Sketches*. Responding to the challenge posed by large urban centres, Kames argued for the establishment of new small cities to cope with the expanding population. Central to his plan was the reduction and restructuring of London to suit the political and commercial requirements of wider society: "My plan would be, to confine the inhabitants of London to 100,000, composed of the King and his household, supreme courts of justice, government-boards, prime nobility and gentry, with necessary shopkeepers, artists, and other dependents"[209] This emphasis on the functional role of cities demonstrated that, for Kames, the physical organisation of a society was a central factor in its progress.

Whilst at odds with contemporary understandings of the urban landscape, the argument in 'Sketch Twelve' did share common themes expressed in Scottish Enlightenment writings on small states.[210] Within 'Sketch Five', he suggested that one of the benefits of smaller populations was to be found in the "…ease of defence, the courage, modesty …. and ardent unity of their citizens, and the uniformity of their manners."[211] Stimulated by the legacy of Machiavelli, Kames argues that physically small but heavily populated areas were more conducive to social order. This was consistent with his plan for nine new towns, outlined in 'Sketch Eleven.'[212] Conceived in these terms, his argument was rooted in an emphasis on the reinvigoration of social conduct through the encouragement of civic identity. Viewed from this standpoint, Kames' concerns over the consequence of commercial society giving rise to large cities and a corresponding weakening of moral character of its inhabitants, used physical geography to demonstrate an alternative vision of city life. Through proposing the establishment of smaller urban centres, he drew on the civic-republican tradition embedded within the Scottish Enlightenment.[213] It has been argued that the discussion of the urban environment in 'Sketch Twelve' highlighted Kames' awareness of the complex relationship between physical space and economic progress. Rather than embracing the rise of cities, as Adam Smith would in his *Lectures on Jurisprudence*, Kames sought to rearrange the physical

[209] Kames, *Sketches*, 553.
[210] Penelope Corfield, *The Impact of the English Town 1700-1800* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1983), 173.
[211] Henry Home, Lord Kames, *Sketches of the History of Man: in Four Volumes* (Dublin: Skinner-Row, 1774-5), 200, cited in Richard Whatmore, "'Neither masters nor Slaves': Small States and Empire in the Long Eighteenth Century' in *Lineages of Empire. The Historical Roots of British Imperial Thought*, ed. D. Kelly (Oxford University Press for the Proceedings of the British Academy no. 155, 2009), 70.
[212] Kames, *Sketches*, 553.
[213] John Pocock, *The Machiavellian Moment: Florentine Political Thought and the Atlantic Republican Tradition* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2003), 503.

structure of society to ensure competency and good social order. [214] At the centre of Kames' argument was a concern with the moral conduct of the individual and the way physical geography was understood to provide insight into human behaviour. One of the central issues highlighted in his analysis of the city was the question of marriage and population growth: "In Paris, domestic servants are encouraged to marry: they are observed to be more settled than when bachelors, and more attentive to their duty."[215] This idea of appropriate social conduct was a key plank of his argument against large cities and the urban environment. Yet it also revealed the way he saw the place of physical geography to be central to exploring the moral character of a socety. Doing so, he revealed how the terrain entered into questions of sexual morality and historical progress.

Aside from his analysis of the urban environment, a second instance of the importance of physical geography to Kames' examination of human behaviour was in the context of gender relations in Amerindian society. Within *Sketches*, he depicted the inhabitants of the region as being driven by carnal desire: "Jealousy accordingly is a symptom of increasing esteem for the female sex; and that passion is visibly creeping in among the natives of Virginia."[216] Continuing his theme of the fundamental difference between the continents of America and Europe, Kames demonstrated how the place of desire was a distinguishing feature of Amerindian society. A key aspect of this discussion was the role of the climate. Here Kames was explicit in his condemnation of Amerindian customs: "...married women become objects of a corrupted taste; and often fall a sacrifice, where morals are imperfect, and the climate an incentive to animal love."[217] Seen in the context of his wider theological concerns, Kames' account ought to be read in terms of the significance of polygenism to his explanation for historical progress. In concerning himself with the sexual behaviour of the inhabitants, his point was to highlight the moral corruption entrenched within Amerindian society. Furthermore, it also highlighted the way in which he used physical geography to reinforce the variations in social conduct around the globe. Here, the idea of climate was used strategically as a way of underlining these differences. Within *Sketches*, the position of America remained a complicated issue in Kames' understanding of stadial theory. A further demonstration of this

[214] Adam Smith, *Lectures on Jurisprudence*, ed. R.L. Meek, D.D. Raphael and P.G. Stein (Indianapolis: Liberty Fund, 1978), 229.
[215] Kames, *Sketches*, 552.
[216] *Ibid.*, 292.
[217] *Ibid.*, 292.

was his account of Greenland. There, its physical location was understood by him to be explained through divine intervention.

Within 'Sketch Twelve', Kames' discussion of Greenland underlines the significance of physical geography to his account of stadial theory. Furthermore, it is the only example where Kames explicitly used the term 'Geographers' in alluding to the disputes surrounding its location and historical origins: "Geographers begin now to conjecture, that Greenland is a part of the continent of North America, without intervention of any sea."[218] What is significant about this comment is that it demonstrates that Kames was not only aware of its cultural distinction from that of Europe, but reveals a concerted effort to incorporate an understanding of the physical arrangement of the globe to stadial theory. Seen in the context of debates surrounding polygenism, this emphasis on structure strengthens the idea that his understanding of physical geography was deeply entwined with his theological commitments. Furthermore, by highlighting fundamental cultural differences between Greenland and its nearest European neighbour, Kames reinforced his positon. To further appreciate his view, attention must be turned to his discussion of the types of languages spoken in the region:

> ….the difference between the Esquimaux language and that of Greenland, was not greater than between the dialects of North and South Greenland, which differ not so much as the High and Low Dutch. Both nations call themselves Innuit or Karalit, and call the Europeans Kablunet. Their stature, features, manners, dress, tents, darts, and boats, are entirely the same. As the language of Greenland resembles not the language of Finland, Lapland, Norway, Tartary, nor that of the Samoides, it is evident, that neither the Esquimaux nor Greenlanders are a colony from any of the countries mentioned.[219]

For Kames, the variations in the languages spoken by the Inuit and Karalit communities paralleled the differences between high and low Dutch. Furthermore, the place of physical geography helped crystallise his understanding of Greenland's historical progress. Identifying the languages of the two communities as almost identical, he argued forcibly that they differed from those of either Europe or central Asia. For Kames, the physical location of Greenland was an important part of how he understood and represented its societal progress. Doing so, he placed greater emphasis on the cultural relationship with North America. Here, physical geography allowed him to illuminate his underlying theological account of historical progress. Aside from assisting in his providential account of the historical progress of Greenland within

[218] *Ibid.*, 558.
[219] *Ibid.*, 558.

*Sketches*, physical geography would also aid Kames in his examination of the limits to societal progress in extreme environmental situations.

Lord Kames' discussion of Northern Europe in 'Sketch One' was in stark contrast to the emphasis on divine intervention which characterised the above descriptions. In this context, the emphasis was on climate and physical geography in complicating living conditions in the region. This emphasis on hardship and struggle was seen by Kames to characterise societal development in the region: "The progress here delineated has, in all temperate climates of the Old World, been precisely uniform."[220] Through focusing on the issue of survival, Kames' discussion understood societal development in Northern Europe to be influenced by the relationship between human need and environmental situation. One particular aspect of the discussion drew attention to how the mountains gave some protection against the wind: "the mountains of Norway and Lapland are a comfortable screen against the north wind."[221] Here, the possibility of societal development was made likely by the character of the terrain. Furthermore, it also demonstrated that environmental factors did play a part in Kames' understanding of historical progress. In this context the place of physical geography was linked in with questions of survival, in which the availability of limited resources forced the population into adopting certain strategies to cope with the conditions. One of the measures adopted was the use of reindeer as both livestock and transportation: "Yet, the Laplanders are well acquainted with private property, every family has tame rain-deer of their own." [222] In emphasising the ownership of livestock, Kames not only indicated that the Laplanders had a notion of private property, but crucially that they had organised their society to accommodate this practise. Furthermore, one of the benefits of this was transportation: "Without rain-deer, the sea-coasts within the reach of fish would admit some inhabitants; but the inland parts would be a desert."[223] Here the physical features of the landscape were understood to have led to adaptations in social living in order to compensate for the environmental limitations imposed on a society. Within *Sketches*, therefore, the place of Lapland demonstrated the link between physical geography and historical progress. Yet what was missing from his account was an idea of the consequences of the terrain on a society's political structure. For that issue, Kames turned his attention to Tartary.

[220] *Ibid.*, 99.
[221] *Ibid.*, 60.
[222] *Ibid.*, 64.
[223] *Ibid.*, 60.

Lord Kames' depiction of the Tartars ran parallel to those outlined by both Montesquieu and Ferguson. In *L'esprit de lois*, Montesquieu had characterised the central Asian society as despotic with an underlining theme of militaristic values.[224] For him, it was their obedience to the sword and the harshness of the terrain which enshrined the authoritarian structure of the society.[225] Building on this account, Kames used *Sketches* to show that the terrain was the reason for the Tartars' inability to progress. Describing how they had remained in the early stages of social formation, he noted that this might be due to the type of social structure they inherited: "As far back as tradition reaches, the Tartars have had flocks and herds; and yet, in a great measure, they not only continue hunters, but retain the ferocity of that state." [226] Here, Kames drew attention to their continued reliance on the hunter-gatherer method of survival and their consequent aggressive character. Crucially, it was seen to be the landscape which restricted the Tartars' ability to progress any further as it lacked any open plains or fertile ground. This problem with a lack of agricultural land was compounded by the region's poor climate: "Tartary is one continued mountain from west to east, rising high above the countries to the south, and declining gradually to the northern ocean, without a single hill to intercept the bitter blasts of the north."[227] Within *Sketches*, therefore, Kames' depiction of Tartary mirrored Lapland in terms of centring on physical features of the landscape and how the poor availability of natural resources had historically influenced its progress.

Extending Montesquieu's analysis of the break between European and Asian societies, Kames indicated that environmental factors were influential. Here a comparison can be drawn with the description of the region in Adam Ferguson's *An Essay on the History of Civil Society*. In both texts, the social structure in Tartary was depicted as static and unstable. For Kames, the restlessness and indiscipline of the Tartars made them prone to aggressive behaviour and brutality: "This disposition has been a dreadful pest to the human species, the Tartars having made more extensive conquests, and destroyed more men, than any other nation known in history … without any regard either to sex or age."[228] Yet rather than blaming it on race or culture, Kames gave an explanation which seemed to be at odds with the concerns expressed elsewhere in *Sketches*. Instead, he measured the lack of historical progress in the region against

[224] Iain McDaniel, *Adam Ferguson in the Scottish Enlightenment: The Roman Past and Europe's Future* (Cambridge, Massachusetts: Harvard University Press, 2013), 89.
[225] Montesquieu, *L'esprit de lois,* 282. Cited in McDaniel, *Adam Ferguson*, 88-89.
[226] Kames, *Sketches*, 59.
[227] *Ibid.*, 60.

the physical geographic criteria needed to develop urban settlements. Doing so, he placed the emphasis on ensuring the correct type of terrain in order for a society to progress.

Unlike his other examples in *Sketches,* Kames' description of Tartary made no reference to theology or divine intervention. Instead the focus was on how the authoritarian values underlying the society manifested themselves in the instability and aggressive character of the society. In this context, he alerted the reader to certain restrictions imposed on the society by the landscape which caused it to stagnate. This point differed from Montesquieu's cultural concern for the history of the Eurasian region. Doing so, it revealed a side to Kames that emphasised an awareness of the way the emergence of civil society depended on certain environmental conditions. This alternative materialistic understanding provided within the *Sketches'* description of Tartary gave physical geography a vision of historical progress that focused on the terrain and its effect on social structure.

Within his *Sketches of the History of Man,* Lord Kames described a view of historical progress which drew on several strands of Enlightenment thought. In doing so, he used physical geography to demonstrate the diversity of social formation around the globe. Whilst contemporary reviews of *Sketches* saw inconsistency and limited intellectual argument, this chapter has revealed coherent, if underdeveloped, ideas surrounding Christian theology and the issue of race. Furthermore, as has been demonstrated, these themes around morality were also expressed in his *Historical Law Tracts*, an exception to this being shown in his discussion of Tartary, where the focus was purely on the physical landscape and its effect on societal progress. Drawing on the work of Montesquieu, Kames demonstrated how the lack of cultivated land in the region hindered the development of Tartar society. One possible explanation for neglecting to mention a theological explanation for this might be partly due to the relationship between *Sketches* and other works of conjectural history. In deliberately choosing not to discuss this topic, Kames may have sought to engage with Adam Ferguson in order to bolster the reputation of his own work. However, by doing so, Kames made a significant contribution to the understanding of the place of physical geography in relation to historical progress. His description of the landscape and emphasis on the underlying cultural values of Tartar society ought to be read as a working out of the relationship between the physical and human environments. In this instance, the role of physical geography was to reveal how Kames' moral scepticism functioned independently of theological concerns. Accepting this anomaly reveals an account of physical geography that drew attention to the way he

highlighted the ambiguities of human nature and commercial society in his account of stadial theory.

## Conclusion

This chapter has examined the place of physical geography in Lord Kames' *Sketches of the History of Man.* It has done this with the intention of demonstrating the way in which the terrain fed into wider understandings of historical progress. Through focusing on the intellectual context in which he wrote, it showed that a close relationship existed between his understanding of societal development and his theological and moral commitments. Whilst many of his contemporary commentators took *Sketches* to be an eclectic and disorganised text, Kames' understanding of physical geography was shown to be integral to explanations of variations in social formation around the globe. One major feature of the work was *Sketches*' engagement with Montesquieu's argument, through which Kames was able to construct an account of physical geography emphasising the existence of boundaries between different societies and their subsequent manifestation of individual routes to societal progress. In this way, physical geography gave him a way of demonstrating a sceptical and antagonistic account of stadial theory.

In the first half of this chapter, the focus was on the discussion of physical geography and climate contained within *L'espirit de Lois.* Whilst partially accepting Montesquieu's argument, Kames nevertheless distanced himself from the hard determinism which *L'espirit de Lois* placed on physical geography. In particular the way in which Montesquieu's description of the place of physical isolation in the English history might be seen to oversimplify the course of events. Yet in certain instances, Kames did see physical geography as playing a significant part in the development of the progress of society. This indecisiveness of the exact role of the terrain is similar to Kames' understanding of the climate. In *Sketches* he distanced himself from the climatic determinism espoused by Montesquieu and Mallet. However, when attention is turned to his discussion of the sexual morality of Amerindian society, Kames was willing to use climatic explanations in order to make a point about morality. Thus whilst *L'espirit de Lois* was an important stimulus for Kames, this chapter has demonstrated that in *Sketches*, Montesquieu's argument was taken with a degree of scepticism over the issue of the climate. Kames' concerns around environmental determinism were also highlighted in his attack on Buffon's climatic arguments.

Through focusing on the account of America within 'Sketch Twelve', it was shown how Kames engaged with Buffon's account of the role of the climate within *Histoire*

*Naturelles*. In concentrating on the theological underpinnings of *Sketches*, it was argued that physical geography framed Kames' account of historical progress in terms of signifying fundamental differences between developments on the American and European continents. Understood in these terms, what Kames was effectively doing was rejecting the holistic view of societal progress in favour of isolating societal formation to a specific region of the globe.

At the root of his account was his deeply held theological driven interpretation of historical progress which impinged on his views concerning providence. In doing so, he denied the universality of the idea of property ownership, emphasising how it was only available to particular societies who had reached a certain point in their historical development. This scepticism towards universal values was also detectable in his account of the rise of urban commercial centres. Focusing on his account of the urban environment in 'Sketch Eleven', this chapter demonstrated how Kames used physical geography to highlight the fundamental problems posed by commerce on the moral conduct of a city's inhabitants. This emphasis on the importance of the terrain in relation to societal progress would be carried through to the second half of this chapter. Through concentrating on the case study of Lapland and Tartary, it was demonstrated how Kames' discussion of the landscape in all three examples allowed him to emphasise the influence it had on social organisation and in doing this Kames used the example of Tartary to reject any discussion of providence of theological or moral arguments in favour of an emphasis on the landscape and its influence on agricultural production, thereby also providing him with a way to underline the influence of the landscape on its inhabitants' culture and therefore on its subsequent political formation.

This chapter has explored the place of physical geography within Lord Kames' *Sketches of the History of Man*. It has sought to demonstrate Kames' use of the landscape to signify a particular understanding of historical progress using theological arguments surrounding polygenist origins of humanity with a concern over the moral consequences of the rise of commercial society. Furthermore, it has been shown that the place of physical geography also sufficiently revealed Kames' insights into human nature that were deeply connected with signifying differences in social formation. This chapter has therefore argued that within *Sketches*, Lord Kames offered a sceptical explanation of stadial theory, emphasising the ambiguities in societal progress. Against his detractors, the arguments within *Sketches* did represent a significant intervention within Scottish Enlightenment debates regarding societal progress. Here the place of physical geography elucidated his providential theology and anxieties around commerce.

## Physical Geography and Stadial Theory in Adam Smith's *Lectures on Jurisprudence*

### Introduction

The publication of the *Lectures on Jurisprudence* in the mid twentieth-century marked a turning point in understandings of Adam Smith's contribution to stadial theory. For Istvan Hont the *Lectures* revealed the true character of Smith's views on the four stages of historical development.[229] Furthermore, the conjectural history provided gave a greater depth to the account of the rise of commercial society presented within Book Three of the *Wealth of Nations*.[230] Within the *Lectures*, the place of physical geography played a fundamental role through signifying constraints on societal progress. According to Hont, the crux of Smith's argument rested on the distinction he made between the actual and imagined parts of economic development.[231] Along with the other authors examined in this thesis, Smith's understanding of social formation was partly motivated by the arguments contained within Book Eighteen of Montesquieu's *L'esprit de lois*.[232] For Montesquieu, physical geography substantially engrained certain cultural values into a society through the process of socialisation. As demonstrated below, this was a significant factor in his explanation for differences in the temperaments of societies on the European and Asiatic continent. For Smith, by contrast, the place of physical geography held a more technical role linked to the development of agriculture, and ultimately a vibrant commercial culture.[233] Smith demonstrated how the terrain required societies to adopt certain strategies in order to progress.

Along with the other individuals examined in this thesis, the place of physical geography proved crucial to Adam Smith's account of historical progress. However, due to the

[229] Whilst Thomas Reid had first voiced speculation over the existence of a record of Smith's *Lectures* in 1764, Edwin Cannan's publication of the Thomas Young manuscript in the late nineteenth-century brought considerable clarity to Smith's place in the Scottish Enlightenment ((MS. AUL Birkwood Papers 2131/4/II, University of Glasgow Special Collections, Glasgow University Library), cited in Ross (1995), 124-5). However it was not until John Lothian's 1958 discovery of Siam Tytler's hand written record that the full recovery of Smith's account of historical progress became apparent (Smith (1978), 9). See also Istvan Hont, *Jealousy of Trade: International Competition and the Nation-State in Historical Perspective* (Cambridge, Massachusetts: Harvard University Press, 2005), 101.
[230] Istvan Hont, *Jealousy of Trade*, 102.
[231] *Ibid.*, 356.
[232] Charles Louis de Secondat, Baron de Montesquieu, *L'esprit de lois*, ed. Anne M. Cohler, Basia Carolyn Miller & Harold Samuel Stone (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1989), 285-308.
[233] Istvan Hont, 'Adam Smith's history of law and government as political theory', in *Political Judgement: Essays for John Dunn*, ed. Richard Bourke, Raymond Geuss and John Dunn (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2009), 155.

overwhelming tendency to cast him as a central figure in the history of economic thought, this aspect of his argument has often been overlooked in the secondary literature. Studied as a historical subject, his work has usually been seen in the context of wider eighteenth-century debates around the emergence of commercial society.[234] Similar problems occur when Smith is investigated as a key contributor to Scottish Enlightenment accounts of historical progress. For Ronald Meek, Adam Smith's contribution to conjectural history was his outlining of the four stages theory, in which every society was depicted as going through certain stages of political and economic development.[235] Meek charged that Smith laid the groundwork for subsequent generations to develop a social scientific basis on which to examine society. However, Meek's version neglects the precise context in which Smith understood social structure and historical progress.[236] Here, physical geography played a complex but vital role in his account of stadial theory.

Within the *Lectures*, Smith's handling of the subject of physical geography exemplified both his reading of Montesquieu and the complex intellectual position he occupied in the Scottish Enlightenment. Whilst partially indebted to natural law theory, Smith's more 'cosmopolitan' stance led him to see physical geography as divorced from cultural and racial concerns.[237] In doing so, he understood the historical progress of European societies to be the result of both the terrain and quality of soil. Viewing Smith's understanding of physical geography in these terms shifts his account of stadial theory away from Meek's concern with the future rise of social science towards a more subtle argument about the progress of commercial societies. Rather than reinforcing the standard liberal and Marxist economic views of Smith, physical geography substantiates revisionist claims about the historical character of his arguments. From this, a more complex picture emerges of him engaging with questions of cultural difference. Physical geography therefore cements a revised eighteenth-century reading of the *Lectures* which complicates Smith's overarching account of history. To fully appreciate this, attention must now be turned to late twentieth-century scholarship on the main body of Smith's work.

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[234] Istvan Hont, *Jealousy of Trade*.
[235] Ronald Meek, *Social Science and the Ignoble Savage* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1976), 116-20.
[236] Meek, *Social Science*, 239.
[237] For a discussion of Smith's relationship with natural law theory, see John Dunn's 'From applied theology to social analysis: the break between John Locke and the Scottish Enlightenment', in *Wealth & Virtue: The Shaping of Political Economy in the Scottish Enlightenment*, ed. Istvan Hont and Michael Ignatieff (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1983), 119-136.

For Donald Winch, Adam Smith's reputation as the founder of political economy and the antagonistic forerunner to Marx, was a product of nineteenth-century interpretations of Smith's writings.[238] Indeed, attempts to identify his work as part of one particular paradigm of Scottish Enlightenment thought fail to capture the complex character of Smith's arguments.[239] Yet for Winch, the 'political' aspects of Smith's writings do exist and concern the machinery of government and legal institutional frameworks.[240] One particular aspect of this interpretation is how Winch locates the *Lectures on Jurisprudence* as a bridge between Smith's arguments in the *Theories of Moral Sentiment* and the *Wealth of Nations.* In doing so, he demonstrates that the ethical concerns expressed in the *Theories of Moral Sentiment* were substantiated in Smith's account of civil law within the *Lectures*.[241] Building on from Winch's analysis of Smith's cosmopolitanism, this chapter will examine how it aided Smith in his dialogue with contemporaries such as Montesquieu over this issue of cultural difference. [242] Recognising how Smith saw the characteristics of human behavior as emerging from the relationship between social structure and physical terrain, this chapter will further argue that physical geography functioned as a central indicator for his understanding of variations of social formation.

For Nicholas Philipson, Adam Smith's account of historical progress was forged within the context of Scottish Enlightenment understandings of sociability.[243] At the centre of this was a dispute between Francis Hutcheson and David Hume over the relationship between the idea of moral sense and cultural custom. In this context Smith engaged with both Hutcheson's stoicism and Hume's account of human nature.[244] Drawing on the idea that Smith used and developed Hume's argument around the 'Science of Man', this chapter will demonstrate how his account of an individual's identity and social values used physical geography to examine the central relationship between cultural custom and historical progress.[245]

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[238] Donald Winch, *Adam Smith's Politics: An Essay in Historiographic Revision* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1978), 4.
[239] Donald Winch, 'Adam Smith's 'enduring particular result': a political and cosmopolitan perspective', in *Wealth & Virtue: The Shaping of Political Economy in the Scottish Enlightenment,* ed. Michael Ignatieff and Istvan Hont (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1983), 253-69.
[240] Winch, 'Adam Smith's 'enduring particular result'', 266.
[241] Winch, *Adam Smith's Politics*, 9-10.
[242] Winch, 'Adam Smith's 'enduring particular result'', 267-68.
[243] Nicholas Phillipson, 'Language, sociability, and history: some reflections on the foundations of Adam Smith's science of man', in *Economy, Polity, and Society: Essays in British Intellectual History, 1750-1950,* ed. Stefan Collini, Richard Whatmore and Brian Young (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2000), 71-2.
[244] *Ibid.*, 84.
[245] Nicholas Phillipson, *Adam Smith: An Enlightened Life* (London: Penguin Books, 2011), 138.

For John Pocock, Adam Smith's contribution to Enlightenment historical understanding was that of an innovator.[246] Focusing on the role of narrative, Pocock signals the way Smith drew on his position as both a lecturer of rhetoric and the Chair of Moral Philosophy at Glasgow University.[247] Furthermore, he argues that it enabled Smith to elucidate the progress of society in terms of identifying certain underlying causes which gave rise to particular circumstances and events. Within the second volume of his *Barbarism and Religion*, Pocock points to the two significant premises on which eighteenth-century 'British' historians wrote. Firstly, that Enlightenment narratives of history centered on exploring the emergence of Europe as a system of independent sovereign states. Secondly, that the connecting principle which held the continent together was the existence of certain shared common values.[248] Like Winch, Pocock demonstrates the way Smith's moral philosophy underlay his conception of the evolving requirements of justice which were central to the issue of historical progress.[249] A further innovation made by Smith was his reassessment of the shepherding stage. Whereas previously it had been seen only as an extension of the hunter-gatherer stage, in Smith's writings, shepherding became the genesis for developments in property relations and civil government.[250] As will be shown in this chapter, this is best exemplified by Smith's examination of Greece and Tartary in the *Lectures*. In both these contexts the physical landscape was a major factor in his description of the differences in the historical development of the two societies. At the centre of Pocock's concern is a concerted effort to show how Smith understood this stage to be central to the future development of agrarian-based feudalism exemplified by the Germanic tribes. Seen in these terms, Smith's criticisms of Montesquieu's understandings of European history were based on his view of a direct connection between shepherding and political liberty. What Pocock does in this respect is to see this as part of a wider transition towards history as a process of social change. Viewing physical geography to be a central feature of Smith's account of the historical process, this chapter will explore the role of the terrain in his explanation of societal development.

Within the *Lectures*, Smith's account of physical geography is best understood in the context of his quest to explore the development of commercial society. In doing so, it

[246] John Pocock, 'Adam Smith and History', in *The Cambridge Companion to Adam Smith*, ed. Knud Haakonssen (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2006), 270.
[247] *Ibid.*, 275.
[248] John Pocock, *Barbarism and Religion: Narratives of Civil Government, Volume Two* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2005), 310.
[249] *Ibid.*, 313.
[250] *Ibid.*, 323-4.

illuminates the intricacies of his explanation for the rise of Europe. Whilst certain scholars have noted the decisive role of geographic characteristics such as trading ports and urban centers, their exact function remains elusive.[251] Within Book Three of the *Wealth of Nations*, Smith presented a detailed analysis of the way in which agricultural production was stimulated by the growth of towns and cities. Here, Smith's idea of the 'unnatural and retrograde order' took agriculture to play a significant part in the emergence of the new urban environments.[252] At the root of Smith's conception of the retrograde order was a view of European history in which agricultural improvement was spurred on by developments in the urban environment. This major insight gave Smith the tools needed to construct a significant account of the progress of Europe that saw the emergence of political liberty as stemming from the political structure of the post-feudal order. Alongside this, the role of agriculture illustrates why commercial activity was key to this interpretation of history. Within Chapter Three, Smith demonstrated how the needs of urban centres required natural resources in order to grow. Thus the physically local rural farmlands became the suppliers on which large towns could draw. This acceptance of the special conditions which drove European history had a considerable impact on Smith's account of stadial theory due to the fact that it made societal progress in the region the product of a distinct set of political circumstances after the fall of the Roman Empire. These related to the way the inhabitants of Europe were suddenly left with a particular set of institutional arrangements which could be used to develop a new form of political organisation – the sovereign state. Through examining Smith's understanding of the local variations in the terrain, this chapter interprets the retrograde order as an undercurrent of the place of physical geography in his account of stadial theory.

Within the *Lectures*, Smith's concern with physical geography can also be seen in the discussions surrounding the emergence of classical city-state republicanism in Greece. Smith's stress on the historical development of a society being influenced by physical geography was further illustrated through his engagement with the work of Jean-Jacques Rousseau. Central to this debate was the place of rivers. In the *Lectures*, Smith would connect their navigation to an explanation of the emergence of civil and judicial authority linked to a concern for *how* the civil state first came about. At the heart of this question was a conflict between two rival interpretations of the origins of society.[253] Through exploring his view of the growth of society

[251] Hont, *Jealousy of Trade,* 107.
[252] *Ibid*., 108.
[253] *Ibid*., 48-68.

along river banks, therefore, this chapter cements the role of physical geography as a key component of Smith's account of stadial theory.

Shifting from Smith's concern with the place of physical geography in relation to the historical development of political structures to how physical geography influenced variations in cultural custom, the second half of this chapter will address how this question was significant in Smith's explanation of social conduct. Drawing on his examination of urban environments, gender relations and political economy, this section will explore the way in which a society's location affected its social structure. Consistent with the first half, a particular feature of the discussion will focus on how he viewed cities located on rivers or the coast as important sites of economic progress. Through exploring the way he dealt with the consequence of commercial society, it provides a way into examining the relationship between physical geography and population behavior. As will be made clear, part of the function of physical geography in the *Lectures* was to address the discrepancies in gender relations around the globe. In this context, Smith drew on Montesquieu's argument for the vital role of the terrain in order to indicate variations in societal structures. In doing so, Smith strayed into the debate on marital relations, and connected it with his attitude towards political economy. Moreover, through discussing his account of China, the examination will focus on how physical geography functioned as an intermediary between his concern for polygamy and economic progress. Here, the argument connected the question back to the issue of land cultivation and the way in which the cultural attitudes allowing polygamy were a stimulant to agricultural production

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The concern with the economic aspects of Smith's reading of historical progress brings into view the way in which the terrain related to his ideas surrounding economic specialisation. In the 'First Fragments of the Division of Labour' he explored how the physical geography of the Scottish Highlands affected its economic progress. Whilst significant work has been done on his prescriptions for economic modernisation in the region, this chapter will highlight how Smith's understanding of physical geography fed into his wider account of the division of labour. Continuing the theme of physical space, in the 'First Fragments' Smith explored the impact of the terrain on the societal progress of the native Americans. In doing so, he identified how the wide open terrain fostered the emergence of isolated communities. Analysing their development in this light, Smith signified his view of historical progress to be linked to how a physical location conditioned a society's cultural customs to develop in a certain way. In closing this chapter, attention will be drawn to the work of John Millar. Here it will be shown how Smith's argument became the basis of an account of stadial theory which stressed the role

of physical geography in highlighting the diversty in social structure that accompanied historical development. Through examining the way physical geography was discussed within the *Lectures on Jurisprudence*, this chapter will demonstrate that Smith's understanding of the subject did not connect it to the nurturing of any particular cultural values. This is particularly important in his account of the rise of European society, where, unlike Montesquieu, he explained the account with reference to the way the region's complex physical landscape provided a solid basis on which to develop strong political institutions. Smith's emphasis on the local idiosyncrasies of the landscape therefore demonstrated an appreciation of the accidental character of historical progress.

## Physical Geography

At the centre of the *Lectures on Jurisprudence* was an explanation for the civil-legal changes that accompanied a society's progress. As a cornerstone of Scottish Enlightenment accounts of stadial theory, his argument drew on a comparative analysis of different social structures around the globe. In line with other authors examined in this thesis, Smith drew on the work of Montesquieu in order to outline his account of historical progress. Within Book Eighteen of *L'esprit de lois*, Montesquieu had described how variations in physical terrain played a central role in explaining differences in social structure. As Silvia Sebastiani notes, Montesquieu's argument reformulated the traditional Aristotelean classification of political regimes into a complex 'mosaic of conditions' which focused on the relationship between citizenship, political structure and cultural values.[254] This 'natural history of politics' understood the organisation of a society emerging from the interplay of certain historic and empirical factors, such as the terrain.[255] Smith's understanding of the importance of the terrain provided him with a basis to explore why the historical progress of Tartary differed so dramatically from that of Greece. Doing so, this chapter will demonstrate how Smith used physical geography to illustrate the importance of the idea of 'location' in the historical process.

To understand the place of Tartary within Adam Smith's account of stadial theory, it is first necessary to recognise how it related to Montesquieu's account of the region in *L'esprit de lois*. For Montesquieu there existed a fundamental difference between the societies found in Tartary and Europe: "…the peoples of northern Europe have conquered as free men; the peoples of Northern Asia have conquered as slaves and have been victorious only for a master." Presenting an essentialist account of the differences in the progress of Europe and Central Asia, he emphasised the way the barren landscape of Tartary reduced its inhabitants to slavery.[256] In the process it gave rise to a society dominated by an emphasis on martial values and despotic leadership.[257] Here, Montesquieu directly connected ideas of physical geography with cultural development. Within the *Lectures,* Smith revised and toned down this emphasis on the

[254] Silvia Sebastiani, *The Scottish Enlightenment: Race, Gender, and the Limits of Progress*, trans. Jeremy Carden (New York: Palgrave, 2013), 25.
[255] Francine Markovits-Pessel, 'Althusser et Montesquieu; l'histoire comme philosophie experémentale', in *Althusser Philosophe*, ed. Pierre Raymond (Paris: Presses Unversitaries de France, 1997), 31-74. Cited in Silvia Sebastiani, *The Scottish Enlightenment*, 25.

[256] Montesquieu, Charles de Secondat, Baron de, *De l'esprit de lois,* ed. Anne M. Cohler, Basia Carolyn Miller and Harold Samuel Stone (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1989), 294.
[257] Iain McDaniel, *Adam Ferguson in the Scottish Enlightenment: The Roman past and Europe's future* (Cambridge, Massachusetts: Harvard University Press, 2013), 88.

terrain's explicit role in the socialisation process. In doing so, he shifted the concern on to the issue of the physical landscape's role in economic development: "…the Tartars have been always a nation of shepherds, which they will always be from the nature of their country, which is dry and high raised above the sea."[258] Focusing on the environmental challenges facing Tartar society, he linked their political structure to the barren and uncultivable landscape of the region. Within the secondary literature, the emphasis has tended to be on how Smith characterised these shepherding societies of central Asia as despotic.[259] This line of thought can be further expanded through connecting Smith's understanding of politics with questions of physical geography. Rejecting Montesquieu's Tacitean-inspired account for the Tartars' lack of development, Smith shifted his emphasis from the concern with political leadership to an explanation focused on the relationship between sustainability and historical progress. Furthermore, his argument focused on the way the landscape adversely affected food production: "….the weather and the air is too cold for the produce of any grain, and as they are for the reasons already mentioned easily united under one head, so we find that more of the great revolutions in the world have arose from them than any other nation in the world."[260] Whilst partially consistent with Montesquieu's account of central Asia, Smith extended the influence of physical geography, presenting a more 'scientific' understanding of the landscape. This variation in approach between the two authors signified Smith's alternate view of the terrain which gave it a primary role in the economic development of the region through connecting it to questions of agricultural production and pastoral society. To further illustrate how issues of land use were so central to Smith's understanding of societal development, the focus will now turn to how he depicted physical geography in connection with the historical progress of Greece.

Depicting the early inhabitants as nomadic, in the *Lectures* Smith emphasised the way in which the physical geography of the region had a considerable effect on the historical progress of pre-republican Greece. Both the fertility of the land and the existence of clear, natural boundaries encouraged a shift from a shepherding society to one based on agriculture.[261] However, clarification is still required on the place of physical geography in relation to the rise of city states. Smith's examination of Greece was part of the continuation

[258] Adam Smith, *Lectures on Jurisprudence,* ed. R.L. Meek, D.D. Raphael, and P.G. Stein (Indianapolis: Liberty Fund, 1982), 220.
[259] Istvan Hont, 'Adam Smith's history of law and government as political theory', 152.
[260] Adam Smith, *Lectures,* 220.
[261] McDaniel, *Adam Ferguson*, 88.

of his dispute with Montesquieu, who, within *L'esprit de lois*, had tended to ignore the region. Montesquieu's focus was instead concerned with how the decline of the Roman Empire had consequences for developments in central Europe, and in particular the Germanic nations.[262] One significant feature of Smith's discussion was how he compared Greece to Tartary. Identifying the keeping and rearing of livestock as a common feature of both nations, he rejected Montesquieu's strong emphasis on the difference in the political character of the two societies. In contrast to *L'esprit de lois*, within the *Lectures* Smith identified the issue of soil quality as a major factor in determining the trajectory of the two societies. As he notes in his discussion of Greece:

> We may easily conceive that a people of this sort, settled in a country where they lived in pretty great ease and security and in a soil capable of yielding them good returns for cultivation, would not only improve the earth but also make considerable advances in the serverall arts and sciences and manufactures, providing they had an opportunity of exporting their sumptuous produce and fruits of their labour.[263]

Focusing on the issue of soil, Smith underlined the way physical features of the landscape influenced the historical progress of Greece. Instead of highlighting cultural differences between Europe and central Asia, he offered an account which demonstrated the similarities in their early development. What altered this was the ability of the early Greeks to make productive use of the land they occupied. Identifying this single factor allowed Smith to develop an account of the historical progress of Greek civilisation which connected the formation of political institutions with the emergence of agricultural production.

For Smith, the ability to settle in one location not only provided early Greek society with security but also led to the development of regular government. A particular consequence of this was his emphasis in the *Lectures* on the rise of city-states such as Athens, where the ability to cultivate the land was directly linked to the development of political institutions: "If we should suppose that a nation of this sort was settled in country naturally defended against invasions, capable of maintaining themselves against their enemies, in such a country a regular form of government would soon take place."[264] A significant feature of Smith's explanation for the rise of city-states in Greece was the role of private property. Through basing the functioning of society on property ownership, Smith's point directly connected to the argument

[262] *Ibid.*, 88.
[263] Smith, *Lectures*, 223.
[264] *Ibid.*, 221.

supplied by John Locke in his *Two Treatises of Government*. For Locke, the idea of private property and consent formed the basis of civil society.[265] Remaining consistent with this view, Smith sought to demonstrate the way historical progress rested on this relationship between property ownership and the legitimacy of the state.[266] Furthermore, part of Smith's concern in the *Lectures* was with how the emergence of democracy was linked to the growth of towns and cities.[267] Focusing on these issues allowed Smith to explain the historical progress of a society that took into account the way political power was intimately connected with the organisation of the physical landscape: "….we find Aristotle giving his opinion that private property should surround the royal lands, because those who were near a city were always for war…"[268] Through understanding the physical origins of the city to be a pragmatic response to maintaining political order, Smith identified how the rise of the urban environment in Greece was a direct response to concerns over security. In doing so, he directly connected the emergence of the Greek city-states as political entities with the physical geographic character of the surrounding landscape.

Alongside his engagement with Montesquieu, Smith also responded to similar themes in the work of Jean-Jacques Rousseau. Within his *First Discourse*, Rousseau had argued that human progress depended on the amount of effort an individual exerted in a particular context. Here, the relationship between the passions and human nature drove his account of the emergence of society: "The passions, again, originate in our wants, and their progress depends on that of our knowledge; for we cannot desire or fear anything, except from the idea we have of it, or from the simple impulse of nature." [269] Such a view had wider implications for the way Rousseau understood history, in which a lack of immediately accessible natural produce was seen as a central indicator for the need for societal development. Furthermore, along with the authors examined in this thesis, he argued that the progress of a society depended on the quality of soil available. However, whereas Smith and others had argued that societal development had occurred where the ground could be cultivated, Rousseau's point was that the bareness of the terrain stimulated both artistic and cultural progress. Here his description of the landscapes of north Africa and southern Europe were crucial.

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[265] John Locke, *Two Treatises of Government*, ed. Peter Laslett (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2010).
[266] Hont, 'Adam Smith's history of law and government as political theory', 142.
[267] *Ibid*., 157.
[268] Adam Smith, *Lectures*, 530.
[269] Jean-Jacques Rousseau, *The Social Contract and Discourses*, trans. G.D.H. Cole, ed. J.H. Brumfitt and John C. Hall (London: David Campbell, 1973), 61.

> …in all the nations of the world, the progress of the understanding has been exactly proportionate to the wants which the peoples had received from nature, or been subjected to by circumstances, and in consequence to the passions that induced them to provide for those necessities. I might instance the arts, rising up in Egypt and expanding with the inundation of the Nile. I might follow their progress into Greece, where they took root afresh, grew up and towered to the skies, among the rocks and sands of Attica, without being able to germinate on the fertile banks of the Eurotas. [270]

For Rousseau, the development of civil society was not due to the ease at which agricultural production could take place, but the amount of work needed to cultivate the land. A good example of this was Attica. In overcoming the terrain, constituted by sand and rock, society in the region was able to progress and flourish. In this way, Rousseau's focus on agricultural production assumed a direct link between the cultivation of the passions and moral progress, in which the historical development of Europe was the consequence of the harsh climatic and geographic conditions in the region. Within the *Lectures,* Smith sought to extend this analysis into an account of the emergence of civil administration.

As has been demonstrated, questions of political formation were central to Smith's account of stadial theory, yet as has been alluded to above, physical geography played a prominent role in how he explained the complex nature of historical progress. Here the varieties of natural landscape encouraged different forms of social structure. One example of this was rivers. Recognition of the way these physical divisions of the terrain affected the landscape provided Smith with an opportunity to explore their influence on societal progress. Within *L'esprit de lois,* Montesquieu's discussion of rivers was linked to an emphasis on the proximity of settlements to water sources: "Men, by their care and their good laws, have made the earth more fit to be their home. We see rivers flowing where there were lakes and marshes; it is a good that nature did not make, but which is maintained by nature."[271] Highlighting man's alteration of the landscape, Montesquieu presented an account of rivers that emphasised their significance for societal expansion. Within the *Lectures*, Smith extended this point in connection with an explanation for why the Tartars were unable to advance beyond a certain stage: "As the Tartars have been always a nation of shepherds, which they will always be from the nature of their country, which is dry and high raised above the sea, with few rivers tho some

[270] *Ibid.,* 61-62.
[271] Montesquieu, *L'esprit de lois*, 289.

very large ones…"[272] Through demonstrating how the absence of waterways led to Tartary's failure to develop, Smith indicated the extent to which he prioritised the physical aspects of the terrain in his account of historical progress. Extending the analysis contained in *L'esprit de lois*, he took the existence of a good river system to be linked to the development of agriculture. Tracking the development of settlements along their banks, Smith's point was to emphasise how rivers were physical situations from which the civil state gradually developed. By understanding rivers as a significant part of the landscape, Smith's discussion linked them to the expansion of civic society, in which their location gave rise to a concentration of social activity and commercial interest.

Smith's concern with the economic benefits of a society's location on a river or sea-coast was further demonstrated with reference to his description of commercial trade in the Mediterranean: "the goods brought from the East Indies were conveyed up the Red Sea, from thence into the Nile … where they were brought up by the Venetian and Genoese merchants chiefly, and by them dispersed thro Europe."[273] Identifying their commercial strategic importance, Smith's account of rivers emphasised their place in terms of the specialisation of labour. Highlighting their role in the history of the region, he demonstrated the way in which these urban centres had financially benefitted from their trade links forged after the crusades: "The great armies which marched from all parts to the conquest of the Holy Land, gave extraordinary encouragement to the shipping of Venice, Genoa, and Pisa."[274] Emphasing their pivotal role in Italian history, Smith's point was that the physical situation of cities such as Genoa gave them unrivalled opportunity to progress as economic and cultural centres. This focus on the relationship between the location of cities and the rise of commerce was driven by a concern with the way different parts of the world were able to connect with one another. Drawing attention to this phenomena, Smith highlighted how access to waterway via rivers or the coast aided the development of urban centers :

> The inhabitants of a city, it is true, must always ultimately derive their subsistence, and the whole materials and means of their industry from the country. But those of a city, situated near either the sea-coast or the banks of a navigable river, are not necessarily confined to derive them from the country in their neighbourhood. They have a much wider range, and may draw them from the most remote corners of the world, either in exchange for the manufactured produce of their own industry, or by performing the

[272] Smith, *Lectures*, 220.
[273] *Ibid*., 243.
[274] Adam Smith, *An Inquiry into the Nature and Causes of the Wealth of Nations, Volume 1,* ed. R.H. Campbell, A.S. Skinner and W.B. Todd (Indianapolis: Liberty Fund, 1981), 406.

> office of carriers between distant countries, and exchanging the produce of one for that of another.[275]

As with the discussion of Italian city-states, in this context Smith made societal progress along a river bank dependent on access to water. Indeed, rather than just limiting his analysis to coasts as stimulating economic progress, Smith's point was that the development of commercial society could occur anywhere as long as the physical landscape allowed strong economic ties to be made with other locations. In the process, Smith drew on Montesquieu's argument, demonstrating how the variations in terrain and distribution of natural resources gave rise to differences in historical progress around the globe.

In the above section, the focus has been on the place of physical geography in Smith's explanation of historical progress. Through highlighting his engagement with Montesquieu and Rousseau, it was demonstrated how Smith's account of the terrain provide an insight into the way he understood the development of different societies. In the second part of this chapter, the discussion will shift from this concern with historical explanation to identifying the place of physical geography in Smith's wider attitude towards society. Taking into consideration his ideas surrounding population, gender, and political economy, it will be shown that the terrain again represented a central part of his explanation for social development. In doing so, it will be demonstrated how physical geography was an integral aspect of Smith's overall account of societal progress.

The place of physical geography in Adam Smith's account of historical progress proved crucial in his explanation of the divergences in the political formation of the Eurasian continents and the varieties in social structure that emerged in different location around the world. As has been indicated above, physical geography also had another role in the *Lectures* in signifying differences in customs and attitudes prevailing in particular societies. In developing his argument, Smith advanced a nascent social theory linked to his writings on virtue and morality. In the *Lectures*, this relationship between social theory and physical geography had a direct relevance for his account of stadial theory. In this instance, physical geography aided Smith's account of societal progress by allowing him to highlight divergences and variations in social formation. Within the *Wealth of Nations*, Smith's discussion of the themes ran alongside an analysis of the rise of commercial society. Under the subheading, 'Of the Natural Progress of Opulence' he turned his attention to the way economic development, and in particular trade, stimulated alterations in the customs of a society. Furthermore, Smith

[275] *Ibid*., 405.

demonstrated how the rise of commercial activity in the Italian city states led to a change in the attitudes and tastes of their population: "The cities of Italy seem to have been the first in Europe which were raised by commerce to any considerable degree of opulence. Italy lay in the center of what was at that time the improved and civilized part of the world."[276] This emphasis on the place of rivers in the rise of European cities was also noticeable in Smith's account of the economic history of France.

> The great trade of Rouen and Bordeaux seems to be altogether the effect of their situation. Rouen is necessarily the entrepôt of almost all the goods which are brought either from foreign countries, or from the maritime provinces of France, for the consumption of the great city of Paris.[277]

Drawing attention to the strong parallels between the physical location of Bordeaux and Rouen, and identifying them as 'entrepôts', Smith emphasised the relationship between physical situation and economic development to be central to his explanation of historical progress. In this way, Smith's view of the emergence of the city placed more stress on the role of physical geography then other Scottish Enlightenment authors had credited it with.[278] Here, the account given in *Wealth of Nations* took cities to be places where commercial and civic activities were a natural outcome of historical development, in which the physical realities of urban society exposed the true extent of its vibrancy and cultural progress.[279] Furthermore, the rise of cities was a consequence of this shift in the economic basis of society. As such, they represented the reorganisation of the post-feudal order away from a society based on agriculture and social subordination to one based on the development of commercial relations and the loosening of social bonds.[280]

For Smith, developments in urban environments were strong indicators for the emergence of commercial society. In contrast to the plains of central Asia, the cities of Europe were places where economic activity and civil government aided the growth of political liberty. Here, similarities existed with Smith's depiction of the emergence of the city-states of Greece. Whilst central to his explanation of the development of commercial society, Smith's account

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[276] *Ibid.*, 406.
[277] *Ibid.*, 274-5.
[278] Henry Home, Lord Kames, S*ketches of the History of Man*, 'Sketch Eleven', ed. James A. Harris, (Indianapolis: Liberty Fund, 2007).
[279] Smith, *Wealth of Nations*, 336.
[280] Micheal Ignatieff, 'John Millar and individualism', in *Wealth & Virtue: The Shaping of Political Economy in the Scottish Enlightenment*, ed. Michael Ignatieff and Istvan Hont (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1983), 324.

of the city was only one side of the Scottish Enlightenment debate over the urban landscape. For Lord Kames, these newly emerging industrial cities across Europe presented a set of challenges. In 'Sketch Eleven' of *Sketches of the History of Man*, Kames depicted the rise of commercial society as having negative consequences for the physical and moral character of the urban landscape.[281] In contrast, rather than seeing cities as the cause of social ills, Smith's account of the urban environment in the city states of Greece highlighted the significance and advantages it had for the progress and security of society as a whole. For Smith, these changes were a by-product of the progress of commercial society itself: "As the arts and improvements and consequently the easieness of procuring livelyhood increase, it is true, the city will become more populous, that is, its number of inhabitants will increase, but the soldiers will be greatly less."[282] Smith's reference to "... the easieness of procuring livelihood", indicated that he understood that the rise of commerce in the city had shifted the priority of its citizens away from public defence and towards individual economic concerns.[283] In this way, Smith's emphasis on the historical progress in the city understood the rise of commerce to alter the physical geography of a society as well as changing the social relations of its inhabitants.

As a way of exploring variations in social attitudes between societies, in the *Lectures* Smith used physical geography to illustrate how these variations were a symptom of differences in cultural value. For example, focusing his attention on Mediterranean coastal settlements, he drew on a particular strain of Scottish Enlightenment thought that emphasised the region's distinction from that of northern Europe. Although not as explicit as Adam Ferguson in his *Essay on the History of Civil Society*, this cultural explanation allowed Smith to describe certain tendencies among the region's inhabitants.

> …. in all the countries on the coast of the Mediterranean Sea, and in many places in Turky, where the wealth of the people is not such as can afford these servants, the utmost confusion, disorder, discontent, and unhappiness is altogether apparent.[284]

Demonstrating how the region was characterised by scenes of chaos and disorder, Smith's emphasis on social unrest not only signified the way he understood different forms of human behavior, but also a concern for differences in cultural values within his account of

[281] Kames, *Sketches of the History of Man*, 'Sketch Eleven', 555. See also David Lieberman, 'The legal needs of a commercial society: the jurisprudence of Lord Kames' in *Wealth and Virtue*, ed. Hont and Ignatieff, 223.
[282] Smith, *Lectures*, 229.
[283] *Ibid*., 229.
[284] *Ibid*., 152.

stadial theory. Along with many of his contemporaries in the Scottish Enlightenment, Smith's view of historical progress took seriously the changing status of women. From this perspective, the question of gender relations was a central issue for societal development.[285] Whilst John Millar was at pains to show that the character of historical progress included changes to the status of women, within *Sketches* Kames had tied the question of marital affairs to variances in cultural custom around the globe.[286] In the *Lectures*, Smith turned his attention to the issue of polygamy, linking it to differences in civil-legal structures:

> The misery of these women must be greatly increased by other circumstances. The only companions they are allowed to have are those which of all others will be the most disagreeable. No one is allowed to see the women in these countries but the eunuchs who attend them. The jealousy of the husband debarrs all other communication. The only persons they can see, then, are either those tyrannical masters, which can not be very agreeable, or tho it may be more so than their other companions can not be much possessed by any one, as they must be continually going from one to the other in order to preserve peace amongst them.[287]

Through examining polygamous relationships in the Mediterranean, Smith demonstrated how the place of females was not only subservient to their husbands, but also isolated from wider society. For Montesquieu, in *L'esprit de lois* the practice of polygamy was a major character trait common among the societies of what he termed the 'East':

> In the various states of the East, the mores are purer as the enclosure of women is stricter. In large states, there are necessarily great lords. The greater their means, the more they are in a position to keep women in a strict enclosure and prevent them from returning to society. This is why women have such admirable mores in the empires of the Turks, Persians, Moguls, China and Japan.[288]

Identifying polygamy as indicating a fundamental cultural difference between the continents of Asia and Europe, Montesquieu focused on how the domestic arrangements in certain societies in the east were affected: "One changes wives in the East so frequently that the domestic government cannot be theirs. Therefore, the eunuchs are put in charge of it; they are given all the keys, and they arrange the business of the house."[289] This concern with central differences between particular regions in terms of gender relations filtered through to Smith's

[285] Sebastiani, *The Scottish Enlightenment*, 133-62.
[286] See John Millar, *The Origin of the Distinction of Ranks*, and Kames, *Sketches of the History of Man*.
[287] Smith, *Lectures*, 152-3.
[288] Montesquieu, *L'esprit de lois*, 271.
[289] *Ibid*., 273-4.

discussion of norms and mores within the *Lectures*. Yet rather than assuming polygamy to be a purely social issue, he extended its role to economic matters. Here, his views on China were central. Starting from the assumption that economic growth depended on the availability of labour, within the *Lectures*, he noted how polygamy limited population levels:

> Polygamy is exceedingly hurtful to the populousness of a nation. An hundred women married to an hundred men will have more children than the same number married to two or three. It may indeed be said that in China, about the mouth of the Ganges, and in Egypt, they are populous notwithstanding polygamy. In those countries there are regulations regarding populousness, and some other circumstances contribute to it, such as the remarkable fertility of the soil.[290]

For Smith, unless thwarted by other factors like the fertility of the land, this cultural practice severely undermined the economic progress of a society. Significantly, the terrain also came up in his discussion of economic specialisation. In this context, physical geography conditioned the organisation of his economic theory and in particular his ideas on economic specialisation. At the start of Book One of the *Wealth of Nations*, Smith pointed to the way economic development had been spurred on by what he termed the 'Division of Labour.'[291] Central to this idea was an account of historical progress in which the skill set required to perform certain activities drove a change in the economic structure of society. A good example of this is Smith's discussion of the workings of a pin factory:

> But in the way in which this business is now carried on, not only the whole work is a peculiar trade, but it is divided into a number of branches, of which the greater part are likewise peculiar trades. One man draws out the wire, another straights it, a third cuts it, a fourth points it, a fifth grinds it at the top for receiving the head…[292]

This particular aspect of his economic argument had a significant consequence for his account of stadial theory. Through maintaining that at the agricultural stages of historical development the skill set required to farm the land could not easily be divided between two individuals, Smith intimated how the Division of Labour was directly connected with the idea of historical progress.[293] At the root of this view of economic specialisation lay a particular

[290] Smith, *Lectures*, 444.
[291] Smith, *Wealth of Nations*, 13.
[292] *Ibid.*, 14-15.
[293] *Ibid.*, 16.

understanding of human nature. Here, the idea of benevolence and self-interest underpinned the ability to exchange goods and services.[294] For Smith, this key relationship between economics and human sociability was a constant feature of historical progress. Whilst the precise origins of Smith's ideas on the Division of Labour are difficult to ascertain, one promising avenue directly connected with his account of historical progress is his assertion in a now lost manuscript of 1750-51 that "Little else is requisite to carry a state to the highest degree of opulence from the lowest barbarism, but peace, easy taxes, and a tolerable administration of justice; all the rest being brought about by the natural course of things."[295] This understanding of the fundamental shift that occurred as a society progressed would certainly correspond with his overall account of stadial theory, however a more promising explanation for the origins of his ideas on the Division of Labour sees it as part of an early draft of the *Wealth of Nations*.[296]

The two sections which make up Smith's 'Fragments on the Division of Labour' explore the way in which economic specialisation occurred among different societies across the globe. Here, the place of physical geography was shown by Smith to be a crucial factor in the emergence of different forms of economic organisation. In particular, he drew the reader's attention to the physical isolation of the Scottish Highlands and underlined the way it mandated a culture of self-sufficiency within the region:

> In mountainous and desert countries, such as the greater part of the Highlands of Scotland, we cannot expect to find, in the same manner, even a smith, a carpenter, or a mason. The scattered families who live at ten or fifteen miles distance from the nearest of any of those three artisans, must learn to perform themselves a great number of little pieces of work for which, in more populous countries, they would readily have recourse to one or other of them.[297]

Highlighting the limited population, Smith emphasized the way the physical landscape also restricted the economic options available in the Scottish Highlands. More specifically, Smith demonstrated how the terrain mandated the physical arrangement of economic output of a society. In this respect, 'Fragments' demonstrated him to be acutely aware of the way physical geography influenced how the local economy was organized. Through demonstrating how

[294] *Ibid*., 25-27.
[295] Dugald Stewart, 'Account of the Life and Writings of Adam Smith, LL.D', in *Essays on Philosophical Subjects*, ed. W.P.D. Wightman & J.C. Bryce (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1980), 322.

[296] Ian Simpson Ross, *The Life of Adam Smith*, (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1995), 295.
[297] *Ibid*., 583.

economic specialization was influenced by the physical character of the landscape, Smith identified the Division of Labour to be a significant part of his account of stadial theory. Smith's concern with the relationship between physical space and social structure in the 'First Fragments' was equally expressed in his discussion of the physical landscape of America. Characterising the Native American society as hunters, he noted how it tended to be organised around small communities:

> In a savage tribe of North Americans, who are generally hunters, the greatest number who can subsist easily together seldom exceeds one hundred or one hundred and fifty persons. Each village is so great a distance from every other, and it is so very difficult and dangerous to travel the country, that there is scarce any intercourse between the different villages even of the same nation except what war and mutual defence give occasion to.[298]

Smith's assessment of North America provides a key insight into how he understood the terrain. Through noting the isolation of villages and the difficulties involved in moving from one location to another, he demonstrated how the landscape conditioned both the self-sufficiency and the aggressive mentality of the inhabitants. In doing so, it demonstrated Smith to be alert to the way the terrain enforced certain conditions on societal development.

By way of conclusion, attention will now be turned to the work of John Millar. As a student of Smith's, Millar was well versed in the civil-legal character of the *Lectures on Jurisprudence.* Along with Smith, in *The Origins and Distinction of Ranks*, Millar provided an account of stadial theory which examined the variations in social custom.[299] Conventional accounts of the work have understood it as a continuation of the argument outlined in the *Lectures*.[300] Within *Ranks,* Millar gave an explanation of societal development which has been understood as one of the most refined examples of stadial theory.[301] In this context the place of physical geography allowed him to allude to fundamental differences in the cultural attitudes of societies around the globe. Within the introduction, he drew on the term "common

[298] Adam Smith, 'First Fragment on the Division of Labour', in *Lectures,* 583.
[299] John Millar, *The Origin of the Distinction of Ranks* (Indianapolis: Liberty Fund, 2006).

[300] This distinction between the 'conservative' and 'liberal' tendencies corresponds approximately to the distinction between the civic-republican and jurisprudential understandings of the Scottish Enlightenment. For a slightly dated, but still useful account of Millar's thought, see Michael Ignatieff's 'John Millar and individualism' in *Wealth & Virtue: The Shaping of Political Economy in the Scottish Enlightenment,* ed. Istvan Hont and Michael Ignatieff (Cambridge University Press, 1983), 317-343.
[301] Andrew Skinner, "RLM: A Scottish Contribution to Marxist Sociology?", *History of Economic Thought Newsletter* (1980), 17-25, 22. Cited in Paul Bowles, 'John Millar, The Legislator and the Mode of Subsistence', *History of European Ideas*, 7, no. 3 (1986), 237-251, 327.

improvements" to demonstrate the way historical developments altered and, crucially, refined the manners and laws which governed a society:

> The following Inquiry is intended to illustrate the natural history of mankind in several important articles …. by pointing out the more obvious and common improvements which gradually arise in the state of society, and by showing the influence of these upon the manners, the laws, and the government of a people.[302]

Like Smith, Millar's account understood changes in societal development to be the outcome of certain circumstances and historical arrangements. Within *Ranks,* early society was characterised as driven by the idea of human survival and the satisfaction of basic needs: "A savage who earns his food by hunting and fishing, or by gathering the spontaneous fruits of the earth, is incapable of attaining any considerable refinement in his pleasures."[303] For Millar, the origins of society lay in the natural instincts of human nature which gave rise to a hunter-gatherer social structure. However, with the arrival of the pastoral stage, physical geography became a significant factor in varying the trajectories of different societies. Within *Ranks,* he illustrates this in his discussion of Italy: "In Arcadia, in Sicily, and in some parts of Italy, where the natural conditions was favourable to the rearing of cattle, or where the inhabitants were but little exposed to the depredations of their neighbours, it is probable that the refinement natural to the pastoral state was carried to a great height."[304] This emphasis on the prolonged nature of the pastoral stage demonstrated how Millar's use of physical geography was intended to show that the character of a landscape affected the way a society developed. Here, the transition to the farming of cattle was understood to be a consequence of improvements in agriculture.[305] This concern with the differences in social structure and how it related to questions of physical geography also informed Millar's analysis of the way cultural attitudes to gender relations varied across the world.[306] As has been demonstrated elsewhere in this thesis, the issue of gender relations was a significant factor for other stadial theorists such as Kames. In common with Smith, Millar identified the landscape as having a significant bearing on the behaviour of a population: "In the most rude and barbarous ages, little or no property can be acquired by particular persons; and, consequently, there are no differences of rank to

[302] John Millar, *The Origin of the Distinction of Ranks* (Indianapolis: Liberty Fund, 2006), 89-90.
[303] *Ibid.*, 94.
[304] *Ibid.*, 128.
[305] *Ibid.*, 130.
[306] Sylvana Tomaselli, 'The enlightenment debate on women', *History Workshop Journal*, 20, no.1 (1985), 101-124, 110.

interrupt the free intercourse of the sexes."[307] Significantly, Millar's discussion understood the relationship between gender and property rights to be crucial to the question of historical development. Furthermore, he reinforced the question of female exploitation as being a key example of a society's lack of progress. Using the example of North America, Millar demonstrated how attitudes towards female chastity were a distinguishing feature of the society:

> The Indians of America think it no stain upon a woman's character, that she has violated the laws of chastity before marriage; nay, if we can give credit to travellers who have visited that country, a trespass of this kind is a circumstance by which a woman is recommended to a husband; who is apt to value her the more, from the consideration that she has been valued by others, and, on the other hand, thinks that he has sufficient ground for putting her away, when he has reason to suspect that she has been overlooked.[308]

Thus Millar's argument in *Ranks* relied on the place of physical geography to reinforce the claims of cultural variation in his account of stadial theory. This use of different geographic contexts as a way to understand variations in social formation provided him with the ability to construct an account of social progress which identified distinct social attitudes as prevailing in certain locations around the globe. Here, his perceived legacy as being one of the founders of modern sociology complements his role as a central purveyor of Smith's argument within the *Lectures*.[309] Thus in placing a discussion of Millar at the end of this chapter, it reveals the way in which his understanding of physical geography extended Smith's emphasis on the local circumstances governing social behaviour, towards an explanation of social structure which identified differences in cultural values as informing historical progress.

This chapter has demonstrated how the place of physical geography was integral to the account of historical progress contained within Adam Smith's *Lectures on Jurisprudence*. Furthermore, it reinforced this through highlighting the way John Millar extended Smith's argument in order to present a comparative discussion of the variations in historical progress which used physical geography to identify fundamental differences in social attitudes across the globe. Through examining the multiple contexts in which this issue arose within the *Lectures*, it was shown that physical geography provided Adam Smith with a way to narrate

[307] Millar, *Ranks*, 94.
[308] *Ibid.*, 99.
[309] William C. Lehmann, *John Millar of Glasgow 1735-1801: His Life and Thought and his Contributions to Sociological Analysis* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1960).

the historical development of Europe which did not involve embracing innate cultural or racial stereotypes. Instead it sought to show how each society's development depended on the advantages which the physical landscape offered. This is important in terms of widening the scholarship on Smith's account of stadial theory as it points to the way circumstance and chance fundamentally characterised his political thought. Significantly, it also demonstrates that the place of physical geography functioned as a counterweight to the view of the European Enlightenment as either rooted in racial prejudice or a particular civic mentality. To Smith, physical geography identified the idiosyncrasies of social formation that characterised his view of historical progress.

## Conclusion

The re-emergence of the *Lectures on Jurisprudence* in the middle decade of the twentieth-century provoked a substantial reassessment of Adam Smith's contribution to the Scottish Enlightenment. A significant feature of this was the way it brought into sharp relief the developmental character of his explanation for the rise of commercial societies.[310] The focus of this chapter has therefore been on the place of physical geography within these debates. Unlike Montesquieu, for Smith, Europe's success did not lie in the supposed cultural superiority of its citizenry but in how different societies in the region were able to take advantage of the continent's complex physical geography. The account of stadial theory expressed both in the *Lectures* and the *Wealth of Nations* therefore illustrates Smith's careful reading of the way in which the landscape influenced both economic development and social structure. As Donald Winch notes, the *Lectures on Jurisprudence* provided a substantial way to understand the relationship between the *Theories of Moral Sentiment* and the *Wealth of Nations*.[311] In Book Eighteen of *L'esprit de lois*, Montesquieu presented an account of social formation which explained variations in social structure through connecting them with the physical terrain. According to Silvia Sebastiani, Montesquieu's argument linked these differences in laws and cultural customs with the influences of climate and physical geography into a 'mosaic of conditions.'[312] As this chapter has demonstrated, the idea of the existence of a patchwork of different socio-political systems was a crucial factor in Smith's appreciation of the place of physical geography in explaining societal progress.

For Istvan Hont, Smith's contribution to the Scottish Enlightenment was in the form of an argument over the development of commercial society. Here, Smith's analysis of the difference between Europe and central Asia in the *Lectures* was crucial. Extending Hont's discussion of the rise of the Greek city-state, this chapter argued that physical geography played a more prominent role than previously thought.[313] Acknowledging Greece's unusual topography, it demonstrated that it is at this juncture that physical geography played a decisive role in the way the shepherding societies of the region were able to settle in one location and

[310] Hont, *Jealousy of Trade,* 360.
[311] Winch, *Adam Smith's Politics*, 10.
[312] Sebastiani, *The Scottish Enlightenment,* 25.
[313] Hont, *Jealousy of Trade*, 51.

develop into an agricultural economy.[314] Furthermore, it was also demonstrated that within the *Lectures* the account of the early history of the Greek city states played a central role in Smith's dispute with Montesquieu, where he drew attention to the common characteristics of both the early shepherding societies of southern Europe and central Asia.[315] In his examination of Tartary, this chapter demonstrated how Smith shifted the emphasis away from Montesquieu's concern with political leadership towards an appreciation of the failure to develop a strong agricultural basis. Within this context, he emphasized the poor quality of soil as being a central factor in the Tartars' failure to develop. Alongside this focus on the account of Greece and Tartary in the *Lectures*, this chapter explored Smith's engagement with Rousseau. In particular the emphasis was on how, within the debate between the two authors, Smith's understanding of rivers was intertwined with a concern for the rise of judicial authority.[316] Furthermore it was shown how rivers also played a substantial role in Smith's account of urban society. Here, discussions around social structure in urban environments overlapped with issues over the terrain. Placing him within the context of early debates over industrialisation and urban expansion, it was demonstrated that his understanding of historical progress was linked to the way the rise of commerce had altered the physical terrain. Doing so, it was demonstrated how for Smith, rivers functioned as commercial gateways and facilitators of social progress, and was shown to correspond with Smith's explanation of the shift in European history outlined in the *Lectures*.

This emphasis on Smith's views surrounding the particular circumstances of a society's formation was examined by John Pocock. As was noted in the introduction to this thesis, Pocock connects Smith's historical work to his teaching position at Glasgow University. Building on this argument, this chapter demonstrated that the place of physical geography in Smith's account of historical progress has been shown to be understood in the way it elucidated the moral underpinnings of his stadial theory.[317] At the root of Pocock's understanding was a view of Smith's interpretation of European history that saw the emergence of European society as made up of a patchwork of different sovereign states. This chapter also explored how Smith's analysis of cultural customs across the globe used physical geography in terms of providing him with a method on which to make distinctions between different regions. Here

[314] Hont, 'Adam Smith's history of law and government as political theory', 157.
[315] McDaniel, *Adam Ferguson*, 88.
[316] Istvan Hont, *Politics in Commercial Society: Jean-Jacques Rousseau and Adam Smith*, ed. Béla Kapossy and Michael Sonenscher (Cambridge, Massachusetts: Harvard University Press, 2015), 48-68.
[317] Pocock, *Barbarism and Religion*.

the focus returned to the familiar ground of cultural custom and in particular the question of polygamy. Physical geography allowed Smith to elucidate and examine the particular characteristics of gender relations and marital structure in the Mediterranean. For Nicholas Phillipson, Smith's blending of the moral visions of Frances Hutcheson and David Hume was an important part of his wider account of stadial theory.[318] In this respect, the place of physical geography ought to be read as indicating that Smith's approach to social custom was consistent with Hume's emphasis on cultural socialisation.[319]

A final area of discussion was the way physical geography featured in Smith's economic argument. In this context, it was shown that in his analysis of China, he used physical geography to demonstrate how social attitudes towards polygamy were directly linked in with this concern with soil quality and population growth. Consistent with his ideas on the variations in cultural norms, it was also highlighted that Smith's understanding of the landscape extended to a concern with how it affected economic progress. This relationship, it was shown, was also observable in Smith's 'First Fragment of the Division of Labour'. Here, attention was drawn to his discussion of the Scottish Highlands where his understanding of the terrain was paramount. In particular, emphasis was put on how the physical geography of the region conditioned its economic arrangement, preventing certain forms of employment from taking place. Furthermore, attention was also drawn to his discussion of Native American society where it was shown that his understanding of physical space enabled him to point to the way the landscape encouraged the development of isolated communities. Therefore, the place of physical geography in Adam Smith's account of stadial theory rested on a view of European history which identified the region as best suited to societal progress. This, it has been demonstrated, was due to both the layout and quality of soil. From highlighting his debate with Montesquieu to the structure of Native American society, it was shown how this influenced multiple aspects of Smith's account of stadial theory. In this way, Smith was concerned to highlight the 'local' circumstances of societal progress that existed throughout the globe which took physical geography to indicate how historical progress occurred more as the result of accident then design.

[318] Phillipson, *Adam Smith*.
[319] Nicholas Phillipson, *Hume* (London: Weidenfield & Nicolson, 1989), 47.

## Thesis Conclusion

This thesis has examined the place of physical geography in Scottish Enlightenment accounts of stadial theory through assessing the work of four contemporary authors: Adam Ferguson, Lord Kames, Adam Smith and John Millar and their individual engagement with the arguments provided by Montesquieu in his *L'esprit de Lois*. Whilst the secondary literature has made considerable progress to illustrate the cultural and moral arguments generated by stadial theory, it has often overlooked the part played by the physical landscape in the contemporary intellectual currents.[320] As highlighted in the introduction, traditional descriptions of stadial theory have had a tendency to emphasise explanations of societal development as advanced by these authors to be deeply connected with the rise of commercial society. However, this thesis has highlighted the significance of physical geography to these accounts. Through investigating contemporary understanding of the landscape, this thesis has argued that the authors explored these issues relative to their understanding of the physical terrain. They entered into lively debates over cultural, moral and economic issues to broaden speculation about the character of societal structure and cultural customs in the Scottish Enlightenment.

In the opening chapter, attention was turned to the work of Montesquieu. Within his *L'esprit de Lois,* physical geography gave him the opportunity to explore the character of historical progress and its global variation. As Silvia Sebastiani notes, Montesquieu's argument was used as an analytical model which subsequent authors were able to deploy to reveal insights into the character of social formation.[321] The principle aim of this chapter was therefore to outline a discussion of physical geography within the text, in order to establish the way in which stadial theorists of the Scottish Enlightenment were able to use the landscape to construct their accounts of historical progress. For Montesquieu, questions of societal structure and historical progress were partly driven by a concern for the climate. In that context, racial interpretations of historical differences between societies were explained by the effect of

[320] See, for example, Iain McDaniel, *Adam Ferguson in the Scottish Enlightenment: The Roman Past and Europe's Future* (Cambridge, Massachusetts: Harvard University Press, 2013). Silvia Sebastiani, *The Scottish Enlightenment: Race, Gender, and the Limits of Progress* (New York: Palgrave 2013). Michael Ignatieff and Istvan Hont, *Wealth & Virtue: The Shaping of Political Economy in the Scottish Enlightenment* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1983). John Robertson, *The Scottish Enlightenment and the Militia Issue* (Edinburgh: John Donald, 1985).

[321] Silvia Sebastiani, *The Scottish Enlightenment,* 23.

temperature on the human body. This point was crucial in his description of northern Europe, where he claimed that the cold air gave the region's inhabitants the ability of rational thought. As recent work on Tacitus demonstrates, Montesquieu's account of the climate had a particular effect on the way contemporaries saw the progress of Europe.[322] Whilst this was shown to be particularly significant in the context of Lord Kames' account of stadial theory, what is important to note is how Montesquieu was able to develop an explanation for societal development that centred on the role of the climate. This was of central importance in the discussion of Tartary given in *L'esprit de lois*. Drawing attention to his analyses of European and Asiatic continents, emphasis was put on the way he used physical geography to highlight deep divisions in social progress.

In the second chapter, the relationship between political character and historical progress was further examined in the work of Adam Ferguson. Within his *An Essay on the History of Civil Society*, the place of physical geography allowed Ferguson to explore significant variations in social formation. Through examining his use of Francis Hutcheson's account of natural sociability, it was demonstrated how this allowed Ferguson to depict human behaviour as being a fundamental factor in historical progress, linked to ideas around social cohesion. Building on recent scholarship, this chapter also examined Ferguson's discussion of the differences in the terrain between the European and Asiatic continents.[323] Within the *Essay*, he argued that poor quality soil and a chaotic social structure had given rise to despotic tendencies and a coercive form of leadership. In addition to this stress on the political characteristics of authoritarian societies such as Tartary, the chapter also highlighted the way Ferguson drew on the account of the climate presented in *L'esprit de lois*. In particular, emphasis was put on his concern with how societal progress on the Indian subcontinent had been stunted by the adverse climate.

Another particular theme highlighted in this thesis was the importance of civic identity to Ferguson's argument. Doing so, it built on from recent scholarship on the relationship between national identity and historical progress which underlay the discussion within the

[322] Christopher Krebs, *A Most Dangerous Book: Tacitus's Germania from the Roman Empire to the Third Reich* (New York: W.W. Norton, 2012), 157-64.
[323] Iain McDaniel, *Adam Ferguson in the Scottish Enlightenment: The Roman Past and Europe's Future* (Cambridge, Massachusetts: Harvard University Press, 2013).

*Essay*.[324] Here, the complex physical geography of Europe was seen by him as a significant factor within his account of stadial theory. One underlying subtext of his argument was the perceived threat posed by China and how this was solved by an emphasis on the reinvigoration of civic values in Europe. In this context, cultural identity and politics came together in the way the *Essay* presented a distinctive account of European historical progress. Examining his discussion, this thesis argued that physical geography allowed him to elucidate these tensions by highlighting a fundamental break in the cultural attitudes of the northern and southern regions of Europe. Through this, Ferguson was able to construct an account of historical progress which emphasised the way physical geography connected with ideas of civic identity and the fragility of moral order. Here, his awareness of the despotic character of the Chinese empire was crucial. As Iain McDaniel notes, Ferguson's concern with the region centred on how the style of government exhibited in the Chinese empire, with its authoritarian social code of conduct and despotic political structure, might infect the politics of Europe.[325] Thus the place of physical geography within the *Essay* signified the importance of civic martial values within Adam Ferguson's account of stadial theory. Doing so, it revealed how this appreciation was deeply connected to his wider general concern with national decline.

Consistent with Ferguson, for Lord Kames, this sense of moral crisis was also a significant part of his account of stadial theory in his *Sketches of the History of Man*. Yet whereas previous work has identified Kames' contribution to the Scottish Enlightenment through ether his legal writings or his controversial views on the issue of race, this thesis highlighted the way his theological position underlay his use of physical geography in his account of stadial theory.[326] Drawing attention to his engagement with Buffon, it was demonstrated how the place of physical geography was integral to his polygenism and scepticism towards commercial society. In this context, Kames' unusual use of physical geography in relation to the exceptional character of the American continent was connected to the idea that the region had been 'created' by God. Within *Sketches*, Kames' explanation of societal progress rested on this idea of the separation of races, therefore his account of societal progress necessarily drew on the idea that different societies existed in different parts of the world as a result of Providence. Kames' use of physical geography, therefore, reveals the way

[324] Iain McDaniel, 'Unsocial sociability in the Scottish Enlightenment: Ferguson and Kames on war, sociability and the foundations of patriotism', *History of European Ideas*, 2015, 662-682.

[325] Ferguson, *Essay*, 254-5. Cited in McDaniel, *Adam Ferguson*, 104.
[326] Andreas Rahmatian, *Lord Kames: Legal and Social Theorist* (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2015).

he understood the historical process to be divinely ordained. Furthermore, this chapter highlighted how his theological beliefs were a significant factor in his criticisms of Montesquieu's ideas souronding climatic determinism. Here, his reading of *L'esprit de lois* was crucial. Drawing on the work of Tacitus, Kames rejected Montesquieu's climatic argument for cultural variation in favour of a more nuanced understanding of the progress of cultural identity. Here physical geography allowed him to ascertain the precise relationship between social custom and moral conduct. This was crucial in his account of the urban environment in 'Sketch Eleven.' There, physical geography provided him with a way of exploring the moral consequences of the rise of commercial society in relation to human behaviour. Doing so, this thesis demonstrated that the place of physical geography was crucial to Kames' account of stadial theory through revealing the extent to which his ideas on societal progress were tempered by a theologically-driven scepticism towards personal morality.

In the final chapter, attention was turned to the work of Adam Smith and his *Lectures on Jurisprudence*. Here physical geography was demonstrated to be integral to the way he understood and explored societal progress. Placing the *Lectures* alongside both *Theories of Moral Sentiment* and the *Wealth of Nations,* this chapter demonstrated the way Smith's argument departed sharply from the one contained in *L'espirit des Lois*. Whereas Montesquieu had emphasised the importance of cultural values in understanding historical progress, Smith's focus was on the way physical geography stimulated variations in social formation. In that context, Smith used the physical landscape to demonstrate a precise connection between the physical location of a society and its cultural progress. This focus on the significance of the setting was also intrinsic to Smith's account of the rise of commercial society. Contrasting his explanation with that of Lord Kames, this thesis demonstrated that Smith's emphasis on the importance of physical location and in particular, navigable rivers, to social and economic development as highlighted by his discussion of Rouen and Bordeaux. Doing so, it revealed how the landscape fed into Smith's wider ideas surrounding social structure. Here the issue of polygamy and gender relations were identified through the way he used the landscape to indicate variations in human conduct. Through alluding to the way gender relations impacted on economic progress in his examination of China, Smith was able to connect this concern with social custom to his account of economic progress. In concluding the chapter, the focus was shifted on to the work of John Millar. Millar's account of stadial theory, it was demonstrated, paralleled Smith's use of physical geography in terms of the way it identified cultural differences as being a major factor in societal development. Through this it was argued that

Millar extended the account given in the *Lectures* to the point of articulating a nascent form of sociology focused on human behaviour. Highlighting this, the chapter argued that the true legacy of the place of physical geography in Adam Smith's account of stadial theory is the way it pointed to the important role local circumstances played in societal development.

This thesis has argued that physical geography reveals significant features of Scottish Enlightenment explanations of historical progress. As has been demonstrated, within the chapters, Ferguson, Kames, Smith and Millar were each motivated by a deep appreciation for the landscape's role in relation to historical progress. The fact that they not only criticised Montesquieu's arguments but disagreed profoundly with one another indicates the crucial significance of the terrain. Instead of understanding the landscape as background context to the development of stadial theory, this thesis has revealed that the place of physical geography should be recast as an intrinsic theme to the intellectual context of the Scottish Enlightenment.

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